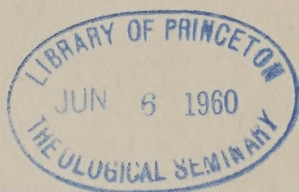
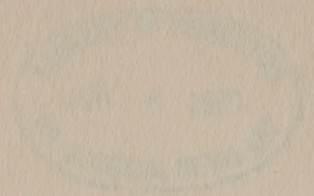


THE HELL OF IT



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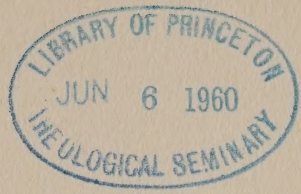
The Hell of It

THE HELL OF IT

A Day's Work in the
Hell of It

By J. H. H. H. H. H.

1870



THE HELL OF IT

A Devil's Guide to Tempting
Americans by Stephen Cole

Doubleday & Company, Inc.
Garden City, New York
1960

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Foreword

The reader may be curious as to how this manuscript came into my possession. The answer is quite simple: I have been through Hell many times during my life, and one day I simply picked up this thing in passing.

It isn't actually a manuscript. It's a transcribed tape. There was a tape recorder on the lecturer's desk in a classroom—the room itself was a shambles and had evidently been abandoned hurriedly—and I admit that I made free with the tape.

My wife and I have played it over several times with mixed emotions, but you can judge for yourself. Factually, the following text is a complete set of lectures just as they were delivered in that hellish classroom. From the internal evidence it is clear that the students—evidently the rankest sort of novices—had been in training for special assignment to the United States. I gather that the indoctrination has been completed and that they are in America now.

S.C.

The Hell of It

Noise

My recall from the United States to deliver this course of lectures (you know our system here—those who can, teach; those who can't, do) reached me on New Year's Eve at the stroke of twelve. After the invariable manner in which WE arrange things, this timing was utterly perfect.

The brawl I was supervising had just reached its absolute howling climax and I was standing there in the fireplace, counting my blessings. I was enjoying a deserved respite from labor—none was required at the moment. I was reminiscing about my fruitful work of the past twelve months. I was gloating over the prospects that loomed in the coming year. And I was, as always, improving the occasion by noting a few items which would prove useful around four o'clock the next afternoon. These hints will be turned over to that one of you who scores highest on my final examination, for if the truth is told—as on occasion it must be, and on these occasions it is quite permissible *entre nous*—I myself am scheduled for a significant promotion.

Since I may never return to America, I derive especial pleasure from recalling the last sounds I heard there—a compound of shotgun blasts, firecrackers, mechanical noisemakers, sirens, whistles, horns, breaking glass, shrieks, screams, shouts, sobs, and drunken laughter. One moment I was at my Going-Away Party, savoring that pandemonium. The next moment I was here. I could hardly tell the difference.

You perceive that there will be very little for you to do in America about noise. Modern America's civilization—with its jackhammers, diesel engines, cocktail parties, jet planes, night clubs, subways,

mood music, radios, and perhaps above all its ubiquitous television—co-operates with us at nearly complete efficiency. Our research indicates that the rising curve of decibels can be expected to continue into the foreseeable future. However, a few soft spots in this generally favorable situation will bear watching:

1. There is an increasing frequency of houses—one might almost call them “homes”—with Quiet Rooms. Word has recently come to us of one dwelling that had space for a Quiet Room actually included in the original plans. Fortunately, lack of money demanded a reduction in the cubic footage of this building. The Rumpus Room remained, of course.

Parenthetically, let me stress the fact that architects are to be strongly encouraged to carry their present concepts about houses to the logical limit. At the present stage of development, a few walls and doors can still be found even in the most advanced designs. For example, an otherwise highly approved house in San Diego, California, has clear glass walls on only three sides. There is a partition—quite solid as high as it extends, which is close to five feet—between the two bedrooms. The bathroom, although its clear glass outer wall faces on the patio, is set off from the inner living area by a similar low barrier *surmounted by glass jalousies that extend clear to the ceiling* and which, before the mechanism rusted, were capable of being closed. Further, this bathroom boasts a bamboo curtain that can be drawn across its entrance, much in the manner of a door. It would seem that, with a little thought, even these remaining invitations to privacy and quiet could be eliminated.

Quiet Rooms, nevertheless, do exist. A typical example, located in Asheville, North Carolina, was contrived from an old storage room under the back porch. Its walls are solid; its single window looks out on no patios; it has only one door. By strictly enforced domestic regulation—the family has six children—this door is not to be opened when closed from within. Indeed, even the most timorous knock is forbidden.

The room itself is furnished with great simplicity. One whole wall is a bookcase, well stocked. There is an easy chair, a reading lamp, and a small table. The only other piece of furniture is that dreadful invention, a prayer desk, with a most revolting crucifix hanging above it. Except for the fact that it is soundproofed, this room closely

resembles one of the cells in that dangerous institution, the Monastery. Duplicates of it, and of the idea behind it, are to be avoided at all costs.

Fortunately this should not be too difficult. The prevailing American cult of extraversion, about which I shall have some things to say in these sessions, must simply be fostered with full zeal. For example, should the man of the house (or the woman, which is more probable) begin to show signs of restlessness, encourage the creation of a ping-pong room in the unused third of the triple garage.

2. The country hideaway is on the increase, as an unhappy result of the otherwise useful financial prosperity. Literally thousands of these cottages, located on lakesides or mountain streams or country roads, dot the American landscape. They are a standing invitation to tranquillity and slowness. Some of their owners even plan—perhaps “dream” is the better word—to improve a small bit of the surrounding land and, ultimately, to retire to an agricultural life, with chickens. After the children have finished college, of course.

The counterattack has, so far, been exceedingly simple and effective. Basically, the thought to encourage is “we’re only here for this too-short weekend, so we’ve got to cram in all the fun we can.” It has not proved essential to encourage the acquisition of shotguns, rifles, outboard motors, or other particular gadgets. These things will come quite naturally, so long as the above-stated main thesis is stressed without letup.

And so long as the corollary—the extension of invitations to friends—is diligently pursued. The weekend guest is one of our soundest inventions. For example, one of our “Closed” files deals with the mountain retreat of an otherwise thoughtful lawyer, who began inviting his friends out for a game of poker and a drink or two. He has now sold the place and retreated back to the city, where we are dealing with him in other ways. Another file, not yet quite closed, illustrates what can be done with even the very young. The eldest child of this family is only eight, and yet he remarked last Saturday night at the lake, “Gee, Mom, it was fun to have the Thompsons down here all day. But now that they’re gone, I’m bored. Who’s coming tomorrow?”

3. It must be admitted that we have, up to the present, failed to prevent the reprinting of certain classic writings that deal with

Quietness and Serenity. Thoreau's *Walden* is as good an example of this genre as any. Publishers simply will continue to put it out—there's money in it—and people simply will continue to read it. Doubtless we shall devise an effective measure against this calamity—a substantial reward is offered for promising suggestions—but so far the most helpful avenue is our Basic Procedure A-1.

Basic Procedure A-1, you will remember, calls for keeping this or any other sound human desire out of the realm of actuality and in the field of wishing, hoping, dreaming. "Wouldn't it be wonderful, if only—" "So help me, five years from now I'll—". It is amazing how this simple device will short-circuit constructive human action, especially if applied at the first stirrings of any uneasiness.

In dealing with books of this sort (I reserve to a later opportunity my extended discussion of the attack against the pernicious habit of reading), the strength of Procedure A-1 can be immeasurably increased if care is taken to have a Foreword included, composed by a suave and wealthy modern writer of the "This is all very fine, but we must be practical" school. If the Foreword is adequately done, with sufficient show of scholarly background and yet with a nimble wit, your client will certainly study it with more care than he does the classic itself. It's a bit easier to read; it is far more balanced and measured in its judgments than the blunt, straight-to-the-point original; and it contains more rationalizations than the average reader can think up for himself. His incipient guilts are, therefore, strangled in the very womb. After the Foreword he can safely read the book itself and put it down with only a slight sigh.

4. Our investigators have noted the ominous spread of the "Retreat Movement" in American religion, not only in its native-soil Catholicism but also in Protestantism. Parish churches of every variety are holding Quiet Days with what would be alarming frequency, if these short intervals of withdrawal really amounted to much. The far more dangerous Retreat, usually of about three days during which complete silence obtains, is being fostered even by such stanch advocates of Muscle and Will Power as Presbyterianism. Should the Baptists take up this activity—if such it can be called—the danger would be extreme indeed.

Keep your eye on those fine little digest magazines. If starry-eyed amateur reports entitled, "I Went on a Retreat," "Three Days of

Peace and Quiet," "Advance by Retreat," "Peace, It's Wonderful," etc., begin to appear with any frequency it would be time to take strong measures, such as leaving the following newspaper clipping in plain view on the conference table when the Parish Planning Council meets to outline the year's program:

"First Church of (insert name of your town) has announced a new weekly program of activities on Saturday nights. Since modern emphasis is on Youth and Juvenile Delinquency, the opening program is aptly entitled 'Juvenile Jinks' and begins with Chapel Choir practice at 7 P.M. This makes a total of eight choirs now organized in the church.

"Following choir practice, an hour of strenuous outside recreation will begin. Such games as basketball, volleyball, badminton, horse-shoes, miniature golf, and shuffleboard will be offered. A jukebox, darts, ping-pong, and the making of tape recordings will be provided for people with these interests and in case of rain.

"Refreshments will be served."

Envy will ensure that a competing set of activities is created at your own meeting. We could hope that ultimately the idea would spread to every congregation in town. Parishes, like people, have only so much time and energy. If they devote them to these doings, they won't have much left over for religion.

Meanwhile, should one of your individual clients begin to think about going on a Retreat, the following insinuations will probably suffice:

(a) "Off there in that monastery I wonder if they let you eat between meals? My gosh, suppose they don't let you smoke!"

(b) "The Retreat is scheduled for next weekend? Why, that's the date of the Georgia-Alabama game!"

(c) "I must *really* be going off my rocker. Maybe I'd better see a psychiatrist. I'd certainly better take a drink—right now."

5. The final danger spot lies in the whole field of Mass Communication, where we had worked things up to such a frenzy that everybody was yelling and waving in order to be heard and seen at all. You may have been told that in an inspired moment I invented rock 'n' roll, with the result that it was immediately against the rules for any singer merely to sing while singing. The least that any enter-

tainer was permitted to do was snap his fingers in rhythm with his beat. It was a fascinating sight to watch a whole quartet employing this technique and to hear the castanets exploding from eight sets of fingers and thumbs. Variants included the swinging of the arms as the vocalizing shrilled along—sometimes you couldn't distinguish a quartet of singers from a foursome of ice skaters or soft-shoe dancers when you took a quick glance. That is, unless somebody had worked in a guitar, which was usually the case.

The complete trend included such items as the applause machine, the laughter tape, the strident advertising pitch of "New! Newer! Newest!," the hyper-mammalian female, the novel written exclusively in four-letter words—in short, we left nothing to the imagination. But I mustn't go on with these illustrations. The point is that the situation has been overplayed, so that many and many a badgered American soul today is yearning for subtlety, for understatement, for suggestion. He realizes that he would like to cooperate with his artist in bringing out the full meaning. He feels, indeed, that half the vitality of art lies in the respondent. He himself would actually like to communicate, and not merely be communicated at.

The communicators, sensitive to mood, are beginning to respond. There is, for example, quite a rash of sneaky commercials that deliberately underplay—some of them are so terribly good that connoisseurs are staying up until all hours merely to catch this ten-second bit. I have noticed quite a lot of advertising written in lower case and—what is worse—based upon the assumption that the reader is gifted with both taste and intelligence. Certain news analysts are behaving as if they made the same presumption and, in addition, seem to think they are sitting in your living room rather than at the far end of a long-distance telephone with a poor connection.

Do keep your eye on this whole business. Should it develop into a genuine trend, my suggestion would be that you can neglect the artist himself rather completely. Percentagewise, his sponsor is far more apt to be the crasser of the two and, hence, the easier to lure back into the jungle of louder and louder. Tighten his fingers around the stick in his hand, and he'll continue to beat the entire public to death, including the artist.

The five above-mentioned aberrations from a basically sound civilization are, I repeat, at the present moment only isolated instances. Do not let them grow to any significant size. Exterior quiet is the prime condition of interior stillness and peace and, therefore, is to be guarded against at all costs.

Activism

Our case histories contain the interesting record of one college graduate, *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa, who took up house painting as his career. "It gives me lots of time to think," he explained to his startled friends, "and requires no thought in itself."

The man was well on his way to great wisdom and incurable happiness when I was able to have him meet a girl, become infatuated, and ultimately commit matrimony. Needless to say, his wife then saw to it that he became an executive. He is now the manager of a nationwide chain of hardware stores, and a secret drinker.

I cite the case for several reasons, the first of which is that this miserable character is (or rather *was*) a rare exception to the usual American evaluation of the inter-relationship of thought and action. The man illustrates, by way of opposites, the significant fact that the United States is a nation of pragmatists who firmly believe that action is an end in itself. Indeed, they go the whole hog and implicitly assume that action is the end and purpose of everything. It has rarely occurred to any American that action is a means, rather than an end, and that the purpose of action is thought—or even contemplation. It will be one of your easier chores to see to it that they never do get this business of ends and means straightened out.

Parenthetically, I must observe that certain of our Colleagues who are specialists in creating climates of opinion have been taking great credit to themselves for this American attitude. Some credit may indeed be due them, and of course I would be the last to deny credit where it has been justly earned. Yet it should be clear to the dullest that the pragmatic viewpoint is all but inevitable in new, young, raw civilizations. Five hundred years from now the situation in

America will be quite different—and one wonders if our Colleagues will then be so ready to make great claims for themselves. Things being what they are, they quite probably will. But in connection with one of the South American nations, which will then be young and “vital.”

I come back to my point by informing you that the United States is long past the vigor of its youth. Oh, I don't go along with certain of our armchair theorists who claim that America is ripe for the Barbarian Invaders—I remember too vividly that the nation managed a considerable display of muscle in the 1940s—but I would certainly concede that it is pretty well along toward middle age. The essential fact, in any case, is that we will not be able to bask much longer in the ease we have been enjoying there. Unless you diligently put my instructions into practice, the time is coming when many Americans will learn that physical reality, physical events and actions are simply things to be picked up, turned round and round, and thought about. After this realization, it is a fairly short step to contemplation. Why, even today a few Americans are beginning to think about dabbling with contemplation some day or other. According to the latest figures, last week twenty-two Americans glanced at “The Cloud of Unknowing,” and three read it through. Six clergymen referred to it in sermons, and one of the clergymen had at one time actually held the book in his hands.

These statistics sound ominous, but you really shouldn't have too much trouble in this area, at least for the present. The fundamental reason for this statement we shall shortly examine, but first I want to underline the necessity for being on your guard when one of your clients is engaged in moderate activity, especially if it is of a repetitious and physical nature like house painting. That kind of thing is terribly stimulating to the human mind and imagination. Some of the best and most creative human thinking is done when the individual is, say, driving a car over long monotonous stretches, or doing the ironing, or sanding a table top in the basement workshop. Humans are often at their “best” when thus occupied. The simple routine activity gets rid of the usual interference of the body with the working of the mind, freeing it as few other tasks do. (Saying the Rosary uses exactly the same principle, and you know how we feel about the Rosary.)

In the fact that the occupation is within human scope lies the other danger, and we shall shortly discuss this point. But first I want to insist that you must be on hand when your man is pitching hay, hoeing his garden, cutting the lawn, trimming a hedge, raking the leaves, sawing wood, painting a chair, or engaging in physical actions of a similar nature. He is about to become lulled, quite happy, and thoughtful in a constructive way. If you are not careful he will begin to mull over his experiences and perhaps even discover their meaning.

The conditions of human life are deliberately, and most unfairly, designed to help your client in this process. As you know, Eternity has been cut down to his size by the invention of Time and has been further adapted to him by a most cunning division into "day" and "night." By day, with diligence, a human can accomplish something simple, or at least get his lumps. Then comes the night, when no man can work. This is the time for rubbing arnica on the places and for thinking about meanings. Why, a decent boxing match proceeds along the same lines. For three minutes one has one's brains beaten out, and then there comes a minute between rounds when one is supposed to collect one's wits.

In short, your client practically *has* to think under the circumstances I have been describing. Therefore, make sure to turn his thoughts into the proper channels. Lead him to become irritated at the steam on his glasses, or the swarm of midges, or at having been nagged by his wife into doing those deferred chores on his only afternoon off. (Don't let him honestly inquire of himself as to when else he could do them.)

Or lead him to gripe at the fact that so much of life is spent in keeping even with erosion and weeds, that life is just one long repair job with so little opportunity for "progress." Work on his natural inclination to believe that keeping the grass trimmed is a negative occupation, vastly less important than building a new doghouse—which, in simple truth, he would only tear down next year as a hopelessly tiny excrescence; by then he would have replaced his cocker with a weimaraner.

Keep him, in short, from realizing what a fine thing he has—the opportunity to involve his body in a manageable and repetitious task which frees his mind to rove all over the universe.

We seem to have been confining ourselves to the men. American women, until they become wealthy enough to acquire maids who do the vacuum cleaning and the ironing, present this same difficulty, even in present-day America with its multitudes of "labor-saving" devices which have "set women free." If your client's husband hasn't yet been able to buy her the ultimate electric gadget, try to keep her mind (constructively busy because she's ironing) away from an attainable thing—like designing a dress that she could whip up that very afternoon. Lead her, perhaps, to design a dream house that she couldn't possibly achieve. Or have her think that her neighbor (also probably ironing at the moment, as an actual matter of fact) is so much better off that she is doubtless "playing bridge with the girls while I have to slave in this hot kitchen." Envy, jealousy, and other discontents lodge easily in the feminine mind.

But American women won't give you much trouble in the long run, for the reason implied above. They are destined to ever-increasing unhappiness as they achieve new mechanical devices to accomplish their every chore. Their situation reminds me of that verse in the Psalms which, notwithstanding the source, so delights me that I cannot forbear quoting it: "And he gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their soul."

And now at last I have the joy of discussing our fundamental American counterattack in this field—the fact that, through the diligent efforts of some of Our Finest, Intemperance is classed as a virtue in the United States. Oh, they don't use the word "intemperance" in its classic sense as we do; they limit its meaning to one interesting manifestation of excessive indulgence. What we know as intemperance they term, deprecatingly enough as they kid each other in the shower room at the country club, "The Old Rat Race." But under the surface joking there is a solid pride that increases with each ulcer. We have, you see, inextricably tied up intemperance with the American definition of "Success"—an always tangible and measurable thing. In this connection I am stressing the measure, or perhaps one might better say the insatiable nature, of American success.

You have observed, in your field trips, our sample specimens who have been ensnared in this way. You have noticed that most of them are businessmen, professional men, clubwomen, Junior Executives, and the like. It is perhaps unnecessary to stress, therefore, that your

fairest game, for the use of this temptation will be found among their fellows, who are most easily induced to put their feet on the wheel of "too much, too fast."

However, nobody is immune—not even farmers. We are weaning them away from the stately rhythms of nature by all kinds of methods—machinery, governmental policy, hydroponics, and in the Deep South by the apparent possibility of four crops a year. (It's interesting to toss into Florida a series of hard freezes every ten years or so. This fillip induces both extra despair and greater exertion.)

Nevertheless, you will do well at the start to confine yourselves to the surer prospects. And in this work don't be discouraged by slow beginnings. The thing gains momentum with every passing year until the ultimate pace is truly breath-taking.

A typical example is a young contractor who was doing a good job and enjoying life with his family. One would have thought that he was proof against our best onslaughts—he was in the correct vocation (there will be a lecture on this important subject); he performed his work thoroughly and well; he provided adequately for his family's needs. The four of them—there were two children—enjoyed fishing together from the bridge on Saturdays, or going on picnics, or having friends in for barbecue and beer. On rainy weekends they had a lot of fun refinishing furniture in the garage or waxing their secondhand car. It was a picture of solid temperate virtue, bourgeois as can be, but full of content.

An inexperienced tempter might have tried to insinuate the bottled blonde from next door, or something of that sort. I did nothing of the kind. Knowing the statistics, which show clearly that it is better to be patient, I played the thing for the long run and attacked on the side of strength.

I got this young contractor's firm to move into bigger bids, bigger jobs, bigger cities. I induced the firm to send him to Denver for two months to superintend the construction of their new building. I saw to it that he met the right people—the big and fast operators. I even managed to work in a side trip to Las Vegas, just to give him a taste.

When the proper time came, I led him to go into business on his own. This was smallish at the start, but the man now had proper goals, and so he soon began taking bigger and bigger jobs, bigger and bigger risks. Naturally he began making bigger and bigger

money, which pleased both of us immensely. But the main point was that I finally led him into a level of operation that is simply over the head, beyond the capacity, of a human being. You observed him on a recent inspection trip.

It is simply impossible for a human being to tend six irons in the fire with one hand while he juggles seven balls in the air with the other, and still remain human. The faster his pace, the more certain he is to become desensitized to all consideration, all subtlety, all kindness, and a host of other gentle arts. Our time studies show conclusively that when a human being is making more than 218 major decisions in one day, he has crossed a line that separates him from the human race.

This is one of the finest by-products of intemperance, but in addition the process makes certain that your client will not grow any more—in fact, he will regress. Oh, I grant you that in his blind gallop through the thick woods of his self-imposed circumstances he will get himself smacked down by brute facts hundreds of times daily. And you might think that, having thus been knocked flat by Reality, he would stagger to his feet, go back, and study the branch that felled him. You might conceivably think that he would deliberately bash his bloody head against it again to study it some more. And so he might, if he were doing only a few things by day and nothing at night.

But we have turned his night into day. We have shortened the interval between rounds to about four seconds. And of course you must, with all diligence, continue this approach. For example, make sure that when your client totters home from the office he's so emotionally exhausted that he falls into a drugged slumber at seven-thirty, or so high on the step that his wife, to escape his nervous prowling, hauls him off to a whingding lasting into the small hours. In either case he will stagger out the next morning, faint yet pursuing, to do twenty more Big Things before nightfall, not one of which he will ever have time to think about.

I have already pointed out how you keep his weekends under control. Hence, until his health cracks, you have only your client's vacations to worry about. Vacations, unfortunately, present opportunities for humans to see things in perspective and even to rediscover the charms of simplicity. There is potential leisure in them,

and hence the possibility of rumination. (Other purported purposes of vacations we can ignore in this context.)

I doubt if I have to do more than outline our approved defensive action. In a word, we make sure that the client's vacation is simply more of the same—more tennis, more alcohol, more speed, more distance. More everything except sleep. Thus he's more on the surface at the end than he was at the beginning. An exactly opposed alternative is possible, but I recommend it only if your man is far gone. For example, at his wife's insistence I once imprisoned my victim on a remote island in a New England lake for his sacred two weeks. She thought that the stillness and the peace might get to him, and they very nearly did. He almost went berserk. After only four days his wife was far happier than he to get him back to the city, away from the lapping of the little waves and the faint rustle of the birch trees.

He had a fatal coronary that fall, but that isn't the point. The little incident really serves to illustrate the fact that few, if any, human beings who have jumped onto the carousel ever get off. The total number of Americans who do so, voluntarily, is all but insignificant. The rest keep on spinning around, ever faster and faster. And the increasing amorality, madness, sickness, divorce, and joylessness which characterize the lives of those on this whirl—it extends from the man himself to his whole family, without exception—are lovely to behold.

These splendid results can readily be managed in all the professions. Heads of corporations, rectors of parishes, university presidents, and the like are all good prospects. Doctors make splendid subjects. Since I plan to speak about this important American profession at some length later on, here I merely urge that you help doctors to be popular, to have a lot of patients—until finally they have more patients than can possibly be attended. This is doubly interesting to watch after it has taken hold, because many doctors start out with a desire to "do good" and to "help humanity." When we move them onto the wheel and there is no time for them to be human, it is pleasurable to watch the torture going on. Most of them, of course, finally give up the struggle and settle for the large practice. When they do, you can leave them and begin to work on their assistant. It's time he went into practice on his own.

Spectator Living

At the start of this lecture I simply must get in a few words on the subject of Retirement. Every living American is obsessed with the thought, and hence you will often have the opportunity to give your opinion on the matter. It is important to realize that there is no categorical either-or. You have to study your victim's individual make-up and advise him accordingly.

To illustrate: I once had a client who was clearly a compulsive worker and a perfectionist. It was evident that he would pound himself to pieces within six months if he had unlimited leisure, and so of course I induced him to retire. Again, I remember another timid soul, a conservative creature of habit who had lived in Buffalo, New York, all his days. I sold his home for him and moved him to Ormond Beach, Florida, far away from every familiar face, sight, and sound—if I do say so myself, it was about as thorough a job of ripping up roots as I have ever seen. The already skinny wretch lost thirty pounds in six months and died of loneliness within the year. But on the other hand I once dealt with a subject in Cincinnati who had two rather significant books in his system and also dabbled in oils, ceramics, and metal crafts. You may be sure that he is still chained to his desk at the post office. Most of his salary goes for luxuries deemed necessary by his gross wife, but he does manage to keep back enough for his daily pint. You just have to use common sense about this decision.

But let me move closer to my subject by reminding you of an interesting American phenomenon of recent years—a short-lived “Do It Yourself” movement.

Note carefully the two aspects of the movement that I have singled out:

1. The fact that a nation of hyperthyroids had to be reminded of creative possibilities under their very noses. Can you imagine a "do it yourself" movement in America two hundred years ago, or one hundred, or even fifty? As I well remember, American life at those times was a "do it yourself" movement twenty-four hours a day, Sundays included. Those old buzzards not only proclaimed but actually practiced such vices as resourcefulness, self-reliance, and hard work—and when they were resting they lugged in another armload of wood. To keep up, I had to work around the clock like the very old scratch.

2. The brief duration of the frenzy. It had hardly gotten off the launching pad before it burned out, leaving a lot of "How To" books still unsold on the shelves.

On both counts the movement was little more than a stirring in sleep, which ought to show you fellows clearly what you'll be dealing with in modern America: a nation of activists who knock themselves out making money and leisure, both of which they devote exclusively to the cause of watching somebody else knock himself out. Americans feel severely frustrated if they are forced to devote their free time or extra money to any other purpose than Spectator Living.

To make it clear why you'll give your client every assistance in holding this thought, I'll point out that you can get a pretty good idea of a human being through this negative approach. Imagine him born without any senses at all. He can neither see, hear, smell, taste, nor touch the reality around him, nor can he feel his own internal workings. Under those conditions, what have you got? A blob of unconscious matter, not even aware of its own existence. Dead life.

To put the same point positively, human beings are bundles of nerves which equip them to come into as much genuine contact with their surrounding reality as is good for them. Oh, their points of contact are on a limited wave band, but they will suffice if stretched to the limit. And that's the idea. They are supposed to stretch to the limit. The more they stretch, the more they're alive.

A final metaphor will clinch the point. Human beings are digestive tracts. They have to take things in, chew things up, and give things

out in order to have any life or strength at all. And it's rather true that the more they sample the smörgåsbord before them, the more alive they are. Oh, they can easily get indigestion by cramming their mouths full and forgetting to chew—by gobbling everything in sight, vomiting, and then going back for more—but we discussed these basic points yesterday.

I've been saying that living is a process in which a person engages himself personally. You'd think that any fool would realize this, and hence that your American client will. It may be so. But even if so, I will guarantee you that his knowledge won't prevent him from trying to absorb life by osmotic process. Activist he may be, but he will nevertheless try to live vicariously as much as he can. This paradoxical situation may well be put this way: Americans devote their incredibly productive energies to the end of achieving arm-chair stagnation, and they do it with incredible success. That is to say, in America the irresistible force is devoted to creating the immovable object. And you will usually find the immovable object sitting before his television set, which he has bought with the wages of his activity.

Observe this specimen carefully, for he has arrived. He has attained *nirvana*. He has been rushing all over the place, recklessly expending his life's energies in order that he may achieve the blissful state in which he does nothing, but observes everything.

Well, let's leave him there for a few moments while we point out that in thus setting up his life's goal he is on the right track, in a sense. You see, one of the penalties for having a material body which must be clothed and fed and housed and doctored and buried lies in the fact that humans have to scurry like the very devil—excuse me—in order to take care of the valid needs of that body. They *have* to “render unto Caesar,” and for perhaps the first fifty years of their earthly existence this must be their main concern. We try to keep them at it long after they have acquired their cave, their privy, their bearskin rug, and enough spare hunting arrows, because the second half of their life is primarily for disentangling, for simplifying, and for “rendering unto God.” I am happy to report almost universal success in this endeavor. For verification of this statement (always a good idea, never trust anybody), glance through your female client's closet some day. You'll find there ample evidence

that in the Land of Plenty a temptation to covet is always construed as an opportunity to obtain.

So I confidently say that your American client will never realize how perilously close his ambitions lie to the truth. You needn't worry in the least, say, about the increasing number of books extolling the simple life, which are appearing in this anxious age. If the average American ever did get back to nature on his own five acres, he would find himself smack in the middle of Our Native Land. This is true for any number of reasons, only one of which is that his previous activism has effectively prevented him from acquiring internal resources. I doubt if there are a dozen people in America (outside of Princeton, New Jersey) who could profitably retire to a small windowless cell and spend the rest of their lives without any outside contact. Similarly I doubt if there are more than a hundred who could profitably take up the simple life. All others only become the man with the hoe, rendering unto Caesar the hard way. Or merely dying on—I mean off—the vine. The state of the pocketbook would determine the alternative.

Now let's get back to our immovable object, who is still gazing fixedly into his basilisk's eye. What's going on here? We have already pointed out that the observation of reality isn't a bad thing in itself—indeed, that it is one of the few opportunities available to these limited creatures. But we've also hinted that true observation involves creative preparation in advance, ruminative digestion afterward, and a multidimensional presentation in between.

To clarify this, let's examine another spectator sport. The simple process of going to see a live football game in a concrete stadium involves boning up on the participants ahead of time, buying one's tickets and one's bourbon, harassing one's wife into getting ready to leave the house before the game actually begins, driving bumper to bumper through the cold November drizzle, hoping that the sun will finally break through, and wondering if Sonavitch can run on a muddy field.

It involves lugging incredible loot up steep stadium stairs, the fitful warmth of a coy sun on cold cheeks, the smell of hot dogs and peanuts, the hot bite of raw whiskey, and the asininites of the ignorant female in the seat ahead. It involves your increasingly numb tailbone, for you have forgotten to bring pillows, and all your violent

antics when Sonavitch breaks loose for an eighty-yard run. It may readily involve loud wrangling and the flourishing of drivers' licenses if you play crinkle-fender in the parking lot, and certainly will involve much savory and unsavory discussion on the way home.

That's an awful lot of involvement, which you would do well to spare your client. How much better for him is a twenty-one inch image of reality in one dimension, introduced into his own pleasantly heated apartment. The only involvement here is the turning of a switch. This is about as low down as it is possible to get, and hence almost nothing is going on. Therefore, time is being killed, life is standing still, your client has a dull headache, his wife is yawning, and so is hell.

Because I've learned the hard way—is there any other?—to take nothing for granted, I'll point out the obvious fact that there is no such thing as being a pure spectator. At the very least one has to push a button and bring in the beer. So you do have to use a bit of judgment and try to keep personal involvement down to its lowest level. For example, it is obviously better to have your client read a book than write one, although I should prefer that he did neither. It is better for him to hear a sermon than to engage in worship—again I have a third preference. Going for a ride in the car is superior to taking a walk. Buying the children a toy stands head and shoulders above teaching them how to make a basket out of goldenrod.

And so it goes. Your job, when your activist client stops for a breather in the middle of his wild race (he reminds me of an ant on a hot griddle, scurrying around all over the place in his effort to escape the flames below), is to keep his leisure-time involvement at a minimum, and I don't think you'll find the job very taxing. In fact, that's precisely the hell of it. Much of the external situation in America, which we are examining from various angles in these early lectures, is so nearly perfect that you will hardly have to lift a finger. The danger is that you might fall into our own trap and be content to loll around, looking on, a spectator of spectators.

Fads

Americans, like all children, love to play "Follow the Leader." Hence, while you can be certain that virtually all the citizens will be doing, wearing, and saying the same things at the same time, you can never be sure from one day to the next what their prevailing obsession will be.

Naturally we have a department whose never-ending work is to invent new fads that will keep Americans going around in circles. By and large this department turns out a sound product, but in my day it had the annoying habit of neglecting to give us advance notice of a change in the weather. Once or twice I remonstrated with the Department Head about this matter, but I found him to be so temperamental and unpredictable that I gave up. I'm afraid you'll simply have to adapt yourselves to mercurially changing behavior patterns. But, after all, *plus ça change, plus la même chose*.

It's easy, and yet difficult, to illustrate this aspect of your American working conditions. Easy because, without stopping to think, I could rattle on for thirty minutes giving you a partial list of the country's recent ephemeral addictions. For example, when I last saw them they all (even the cardiac) were living in split-level houses wherein even the destitute managed wall-to-wall carpeting upon which they all (even the obese) reclined in monkey suits listening (even those deaf in one ear) to stereophonic record players. Out in the garage stood a white two-door hardtop with fins, its trunk loaded with last season's styles waiting to be taken to the rummage sale. Over behind the oil burner was an old copy of *Life*, featuring the achievement of thirty-two college students who had triumphantly crowded themselves into a telephone booth. I was able

to identify a dusty circle of plastic, stashed behind the automatic washer, as a nine-day wonder called a Hula Hoop.

But all this sort of documentation is pointless because of the impossibility of predicting the direction in which Americans will be galloping when you get there. Their fads don't even have any consistency across the board—for example, when the ads are insisting that "it's what's up front that counts," the movie stars are just as apt as not to be flat-chested. All I can safely say is that your client will indeed always be charging, along with the rest of the posse, into some presently fashionable cul-de-sac. "They went that-away" is America's national motto, which may account for the durability of its only hardy perennial, the Western.

Innumerable side uses of Faddism can be easily imagined—and they should be exploited in your lighter moments—but they are never the main point. Your primary concern is everlastingly to encourage the basic restlessness that keeps the thing going. If your client is constantly whining, "I want, I want, I want—" he will almost never stop to inquire "What for?". And it's no small victory that few American adults and an even smaller number of American youngsters have any definite and set purpose in life. Basically they all subscribe to the "here today and gone tomorrow" attitude that results from our own disciplined and single-track efforts in this field.

All the same, let's be careful about that concept, *wanting*, or *desire*—called "motivation" in their present (?) language fad. It's all too true that a human can be anything or do anything that he really desires. But, fortunately, that proverb merely states the problem. The trick is to make him desire and, what with one thing and another, that's a difficult trick in America. It's especially difficult when desires are scattered all over the place, as they are by emphasis on faddism.

The subject is distasteful, but I must go on and point out a terrible danger involved in the fact that the greater part of human life lies in wanting. You're in real trouble if your client ever learns the truth about "asking, seeking, and knocking." I plan to return to other levels of this thought in a later lecture, but I'll sketch out a bit of it here, beginning with the happy observation that we have pretty successfully concealed the real meaning of that pregnant

phrase by limiting its application to petitionary prayer and by encouraging belief in the existence of Santa Claus.

On the sobering side, it must be admitted that every now and then somebody escapes all our vigilance—it could happen to your client. He could stumble upon the truth that the Creator loves to be questioned endlessly about His universe—a rather childish trait, but there it is. He could learn that barriers are placed in his way so that he may climb up over them, ultimately, to a considerable height if the process is persisted in. He could discover that the correct questions are the keys that open all the locked doors. Once a person is on this path it is terribly difficult to prevent him from asking ever more and more acute questions all his life long, and hence from discovering ever more and more pointed answers.

I chanced to be evaluating the work of a subordinate one Saturday afternoon when a youngster of seventeen drove up in his white Thunderbird to show off a new tape recorder to his friend, the son of my subordinate's client. Momentarily our glee knew no bounds, if only because there had been no particular "occasion" connected with the acquiring of the tape recorder. The visiting youngster had simply seen it, "wanted" it, and bought it. This momentary delight was compounded, too, because the client's son happened to be out in the garage concocting a hopeless sea sled from materials he had found in the city dump—a weathered plank, the handle bar from a deceased bicycle, and half a can of crusted paint.

I went inside with my subordinate to watch the fun. We induced his client to divert his attention from Saturday's beer-and-ball-game ritual and to eavesdrop on the conversation out in the garage. I observed how the client stirred uneasily at the clear contrast between his son's miserable handiwork and the visitor's gleaming gadget. I saw him accept my subordinate's suggestion that he buy a bigger and better recorder for his own son's impending birthday. He did wince perceptibly when I myself inserted the idea of a red Mercedes for graduation, but the attack was decidedly getting somewhere. I believe we would have succeeded if it hadn't been for the son himself.

At supper that evening the youngster told his father, offhandedly and with his mouth full, that he couldn't see the use of a tape recorder except perhaps as an aid to education or in technical work.

Certainly it wasn't to be regarded as an amusing toy. And as for automobiles, no kid should have one until he could buy and maintain it himself out of his own earnings.

Naturally I warned my subordinate to devote more attention in the future to the son of that family than to his old man—the kid clearly had hold of a lot of truths connected with needing and wanting. But because of the exceptional nature of the situation, I gave out only ten demerits. My subordinate was hardly to be blamed for being caught napping, since it is an established fact that most Americans never get what they need because they so readily obtain what they want. Faddism, coupled with material prosperity, generally takes care of this incipient problem nicely. Yet you see that we must never presume.

To continue my warnings in this area, let me urge you to exercise a bit of sound judgment if the particular fad of the moment should happen, by sheerest accident or through criminal carelessness on the part of our Department Head, to orbit into an important zone. A handy example of what I mean was a recent dietary craze. Nobody wanted to be fat, or even plump, any more. At the same time they were all deeply concerned about their cholesterol level. My, how they all did leap into the saddle and go charging off toward the good life of corn oil, leafy vegetables, sardines, and lean meat. For a while there the butter, egg, and pork men were shaking in their shoes, while the writers of popular articles about dieting waxed fat.

This diet business is a recurring fad, and it does get down near important areas of human life, so we'd better kick it around a bit. You can foster it, all right, but do be very sure to keep the reasons for it on the surface level and especially on the level of pride. "I'm ashamed of the way I look in a bathing suit." "Say, doesn't Helen look slim and well!"

To be technical about this, it's all right if your client indulges himself in abstinence, but do be on the lookout lest inadvertently he goes over the line and thereby learns something about fasting. In other words, they can diet to their utter content just so long as they think of the process as a method of controlling weight. But do be careful lest somebody discovers that it's also a way of controlling himself.

I suppose they all have heard, one time or another, the phrase,

"If a man will come after me let him deny himself." Naturally the statement is dreadfully true, but so far no American knows what it really means and we don't want him to find out. Without exception, your client interprets the words as meaning that from time to time it's a good idea to defer indulging himself in some particular item like a second helping of apple pie, or at least to omit the ice cream. It has never occurred to him that the advice means exactly what it says: That he should deny *himself*, not merely something *to* himself.

Similarly they have all heard the saying, "Some things come out only by prayer and fasting." As we well know, prayer and fasting are indeed the only remedies for a person's inordinate desires. This is such an important matter that we have tried to confuse the issue in every possible way, even to the extent of featuring part of the truth in the quotation so that other aspects will be overlooked. (This is a sound device that must often be employed. In the particular illustration the procedure gains force because it appears to move things into the realm of the esoteric and the magical, and no red-blooded American cares to admit his attraction to such superstitions.) In any case, we generally exegete the passage to mean something like, "If the pastor would only pray and fast all next Friday, maybe our Willie would stop making bomb-scare telephone calls to the police." I think we've had some success in this line. Certainly most parents would think of anything before it would occur to them to exorcise their darling devil with a hairbrush, and few clergymen would care to fall in with such an intimate and rigorous proposal.

I do hasten to say that both the putative fasting of the priest and the unlikely flogging of the child contain their great elements of truth, and on the beginning level for the identical reason: A human being is a body-spirit complex, with the interaction going both ways across the hyphen. You can indeed get to little Willie's spirit through his rear end, and vice versa. (How the priest's fasting can jump across the gap and do Willie some good I'll discuss in a few moments, after I've prepared a bit more ground.) Some Americans, especially those who take their Sacraments seriously, suspect this fact that the body and the spirit are in cahoots.

But I doubt if any client of yours will ever realize that his desires are as flexible as his bay window. He thinks that his wants are a fixed quantity, rather than a concertina that is almost infinitely flex-

ible in either direction. I have never met an American who knows that his desires can and do increase with coddling and diminish with denial. This knowledge must resolutely be kept from your client.

Oh, he has every opportunity to learn that desire grows with feeding, but the message just doesn't get across—even to those who keep Lent. I have never in my experience known an American who, having inherited the twenty-five thousand dollars which yesterday were beyond the dreams of his wildest imaginings, tomorrow didn't begin to long for fifty thousand—and this despite the fact that he hasn't the least idea what to do with the twenty-five. I never expect to find the American who owns really enough automobiles, and I say this knowing a married couple, whose one child is away at college, that possesses five. Their rationalization is that Junior might bring a group of his friends home some weekend.

It's a magnificent thing to keep inordinate human desire ever growing, because in that way unhappiness grows apace. Of course unhappiness is a symptom, and there is a theoretical chance that an unhappy person might possibly examine his symptom to find out the cause. So do keep your eye on such a fad as the diet craze. The others, obviously, should always be encouraged.

A final reason for this policy of ours is that faddism wonderfully corrupts that half-truth variously described as "the Brotherhood of Man," "the Communion of Saints," "the Mystery of Human Corporateness," or "Togetherness." I hasten to say that you and I can have only intellectual understanding of this anthill side of human nature, because WE are all "loners." We're all individual creations—with a community of interest, naturally, but without that gluey element called "blood relationship." I have no father or mother, no brother or son. As a matter of fact, I haven't a friend in the universe—for which fact I'm profoundly thankful. It means nobody can touch me. Your loss is not my loss, nor is my gain your gain. Each one of you can go to Hell for all I care, and doubtless you will. Just don't expect me to shed a tear.

But this isn't so among humans. To get them into the world requires the lusty co-operation of two people, and they can come into being only as a member of a family and a race—I don't mean a brown, red, yellow, or white one; I mean the human race.

Naturally each brutish monster is an individual, but each one is mystically united to all his contemporaries, to all who went before, and to all who will come after. The gain for one human is the gain of all, and a loss for one is a loss for all. You see, I hadn't forgotten about that fasting priest. As he tightens his belt, little Willie straightens up somewhat.

Now this is a messy situation with thousands of uses in our work. It explains, for example, why we can so often make our client fall by tripping somebody else. It explains why divisiveness is an end we must always hold in view. But my only concern at the moment is to expose the opposite face of the coin I showed you a few minutes ago, when I stated that it is often wise to accent half a truth if in so doing you can short-circuit the rest. Now I'm saying that a splendid way to deal with a half-truth is to exalt it into the whole truth. This we have accomplished in modern America. We have so exalted their corporateness that they have completely forgotten about their individualism. The result is a splendid dank level of savorless conformity. "Characters" of any kind are at a premium, with the only significant exceptions being found in rural areas and in certain specialized fields of the construction industry.

For example, I derive great delight from remembering the Prussian-descent millionaire who bought his summer-escape acreage in the Tennessee hills and, at my suggestion, began to treat his native neighbors as if they were European peasants. But the delight proceeds only from recalling what happened to the Prussian, who is still boring friends in Chicago with his tales of American savages and showing his knife wounds to prove it. Unfortunately the lanky mountaineer who called him out remains a crusty individualist to this day, and probably always will. Even his brief jail sentence didn't modify him in the slightest. He'd been to jail before and had learned that while he was a guest of the state his white lightning was increasing only in palatability and demand. The ninety-day arrangement suited him very well.

Structural-steel workers are just about as bad as hillbillies. They continue to take an actual pride in their work, especially when it comes to coping with the impossible, which they accomplish in half an hour by means of an old hydraulic jack and a crowbar. Even getting them fired—and they'll quit at the drop of a criticism—doesn't

accomplish anything permanent. They turn up again next week at another construction job a thousand miles away, just as independent as ever.

For completeness's sake in listing these exceptions we might also include a few small boys who have so far escaped absorption, but the essential thesis of this lecture remains true—that American behavior falls characteristically into a pattern. It amuses me that the pattern is exactly opposed to reality. All Americans have been told a thousand times that they are living in a universe which is expanding outward in all directions, yet they themselves insist upon huddling together in the center.

The Religious Scene

True religion is our deadly enemy, since it successfully reunites the creature with its Creator, but you won't be called upon to cope with it during your American assignment. Oh, there are indeed a number of people in the United States who have been exposed to the genuine article, and there are even some who practice it—for the most part in small, hidden-away, and forgotten parishes. These infuriating people and places have, however, been turned over to the Elite Corps of specialists in the field. Your concern will be entirely with pseudo religion. But don't feel cheated, for this is an extremely large order.

I wish I could be brilliantly facile and sketch out a single typical example of the thing you'll run up against, but the job isn't that easy. Some of you will be dealing with the earnest vulgarities that go on in ugly wooden buildings, red-brown with dust from the passing dirt road and sporting two sagging privies at opposite ends of the eroded picnic grounds just below the cemetery. Others of you will yawn through the remote unrealities perfectly staged in magnificent Gothic piles on a fashionable avenue. Still others will be called upon to keep up with the strenuous activities practiced by Junior Executives in the suburbs, where Joe the rector shoots golf in the low seventies. An unfortunate few will get it while en route to an afternoon of fishing and an evening of poker at Skytop Lodge, with God coming along via the car radio, courtesy of NBC. I wonder if it is possible to get used to that hideous lament which is compounded of female voices and organ music transcribed electrically?

But this is the wrong way to approach our subject. The first sig-

nificant fact you must realize about American religion is that the citizens are addicted to sectarianism. We have them to the point where they positively dote on this divisiveness, to the extent that they have made it a national idol named, at our suggestion, Freedom of Religion. Hundreds of denominations already flourish in the United States, but part of your work will be to see to it that new sects arise, the latest arriving being the surest that it has not only the last but the only word. This is an utterly safe application of our time-tested principle that the corruption of the best is not only the worst but also the easiest. Naturally you know that each human view of God must of necessity be too small, and that the humble realization of this fact is the beginning of wisdom. But you will be positively amazed to learn in America how short a step it is from the beginning, and humbly joyous, cry, "This I see!," to the final, and grimly threatening, war cry "This is all there is to see."

Indeed, the sectarian spirit is so helpful in our American work that a special prize is awarded every decade to the one who has succeeded in creating the most new denominations during the ten-year period. You are urged to try for this prize, which includes an amusing side trip to the meeting of the leaders of the Ecumenical Movement. Here brotherhood does reign supreme, but that only underlines the fact that at the grass roots sectarianism insures the continuance of bitter violence among the disciples of charity. A not insignificant aspect of this is that the partisans are encouraged to beat on each other, rather than on us. The other feature that I especially like is summed up by the truism that so long as people keep on grinding axes, they will never get around to cutting wood. Oh well, you get the idea.

But before I turn to another aspect of the American Religious Scene, let me outline how we deal with that other prong of the Sectarian Fork which is generally called the Community Church. A good many years ago one of our great logicians pointed out that we need only apply Basic Procedure A-2—the substitution of means for ends—to the Community Church idea and we would come out with a mere Lares and Penates of Suburbia, whose central symbol would be the flag rather than the cross. Experience has demonstrated the soundness of this opinion of mine—there's no sense in being coy or falsely modest. With care on your part there should be no harm in

a million Community Churches, and they do dot the American scene increasingly. Just be sure to transubstantiate them into a merely chummy sort of thing, addicted to picnics, group dynamics, and the doctrine of "acceptance"—being particularly careful on Good Friday when they will be reading about One Who was despised and rejected of men. On other days it is admittedly easier to help them limit their acceptance to the right people and the right ideas.

Before we get into more important points, your attention must be called to the dominant position of Emotionalism in American religion. The United States has, you remember, its history of the Great Awakening. This is continued in its present practice of the Revival—whether that be held in a sweltering tent on the Kansas plains at harvest time, complete with snake handling and the promise of physical healing, or more sedately and with enormous organization in Madison Square Garden.

Never fail to keep pulling the wool of emotionalism over the eyes of your clients. The verb "to feel" must be constantly used in a land where we have already induced whole denominations to limit their entire religious practice to that one beginning aspect of it which is called "conversion"—I have already discussed the device of extolling a partial truth so that the whole will suffer. The word "conversion," in America, means an emotional jolt of one kind or another. Keep on using the Great Verb, and they will never learn that religion has to do with the *will*—the will of God and the will of man—and that these two forces must become one, through great discipline on the part of man, and especially through the discipline of the emotions, those weakest links in the entire human nature.

The Son made this perfectly clear. "Take up your cross daily." "Not my will but thine." "Which of these two did the will of his father?" But clarity can easily be prevented from having anything to do with the religious situation in America. Every time they hear, "I came to do the will of him that sent me," they were obviously feeling bored or guilty enough to be in church that morning, so it is a simple matter to remind them that the way they feel is important, and if they feel nothing they have been cheated rather than rewarded. Thus you will have them actually trying to unite their emotions with the emotions of God and thinking that His love is a gooey subjective feeling rather than a vigorous outgoing strength.

If they should ever unite their wills, they would know His only "emotion," which is Beatitude. Keep them trying to do it the other way around, and they will only know grimness or despondency, never joy.

The previous topic reminds me of the universal American equation of Religion with Magic—a lot of spadework lies behind this happy consummation. Magic, as you know, is the attempt by means of the correct incantations to make the supernatural do the will of the human. Of course all Americans believe that in their enlightenment they abandoned Magic centuries ago, and hence to charge them with its present practice would seem ridiculous. So avoid terminology. Be content to keep them at their lamp rubbing, and they will always think of God as a sort of Genie who will jump to their service when they happen to stroke in the proper manner.

The conception of God as the Cosmic Bellhop is so fundamental in American religion that I shall dwell for a time on this basic self-centeredness. It must be pointed out first—indeed, it *has* been pointed out by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and a dozen other spiritual writers—that a person quite unavoidably brings his own innate selfishness into the practice of religion. He *has* to, because it's all he's got at the time. Hence it's a valid beginning, for it's the only possible beginning. Oh, your client would undoubtedly rarify his reasons for "trying religion" if he should ever articulate them, but underneath all the verbiage lies the stark question, "What's in it for me?"

It's a good question, which is why we try to make it sound so bad. In classic phrases, your client is on the level of "love of God for self," which is indeed a step above the level of "love of self for self." But, for all that the step marks an advance that I trust your victim never takes, it is a perfectly safe level to keep him on for a while, because if he does not go on to the "love of God for God" he will inevitably slide back to pure selfishness.

Keeping your client on the second level is exactly what our specialists have geared American pseudo religion to do. For example, they see to it that a truly magnificent spate of books dealing with selfishness and magic vomits forth from the religious presses every year. "Why Not Give God a Try?"; "Trying God" (yes, He is very trying, but this isn't what they mean); "Serenity of Soul

and Colon"; "Prayer Actually Works!"—the titles are legion, but they all deal with various aspects of lamp rubbing. They all treat God as a means to an end, which is the greatest (and easiest) error possible to a human being.

In further illustration of our technique and our success, I point out that the typical sermon is also exclusively occupied with this topic. Most preachers have a strong anxiety neurosis—I won't go into the reasons, which include our policy of low pay, of dumping irrelevant chores upon their shoulders, of inducing them to accept the same, of constant teaching that the service of man takes precedence over the service of God, and a host of other items. The pragmatic point is that they will do anything to please the congregation lest they don't have any congregation. Oh, don't push preachers too far; they have a bad history of martyrdom. Just play it down the middle and they will promise their sheep everything under the sun, in the name of God. Peace, prosperity, an integrated personality, the boss's daughter, a raise in a couple of weeks, renewed sexual potency, a Republican landslide—anything you can think of and a lot of things you can't they will promise along with God.

As a matter of fact, it's safe to say that they don't promise God at all and that their customers don't really want God. The customers want God's gifts rather than God Himself—and very wisely so, in my opinion—so the preachers promise these things. It's all most of them know about, anyway.

The result is interesting when God, in His attempt to lead the person toward Himself, withholds His gifts. With very little effort on our part, this immediately becomes "the failure of religion." "I tried it," the patient says. "It doesn't work."

That last word reminds me of the extent to which the typically American activism has penetrated its religion. "Be still and know that I am God" has given way to that splendid slogan of the American Primate who stated, "Religion is Big Business." He's right—in modern America it is. I think you'll be astonished and delighted at the horizontal strenuousness that goes on (since there can never be human heights without depths, it's always good to keep your client moving horizontally). The Prelates are making hay during the presently prevailing favorable climate of opinion—

make no mistake about it, Americans are interested in religion nowadays; even young Americans, who ought to have their minds on the fast buck—and have instituted the Numbers Racket in every conceivable form.

For example, it's a rare diocese or parish that hasn't had a Capital Funds Drive during the past few years—professionally conducted, of course. The ones that haven't are planning them—I admit that this is a dangerous approach because it might stir up some genuine self-giving, but you'll see in a moment why we go along. Naturally, while the pledges pour in they're hammering and sawing with manic fury. And to make sure that they can maintain all this increased plant capacity, they offer prizes for the largest number of baptisms achieved since the last Annual Report.

You and I know how much that sort of thing amounts to. As a matter of fact, they do, too. It is written, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." That happens to be true, and it's been rather annoying across the years to have that knowledge so readily available. However, as you can see, we have managed to invert the proposition. Its converse is *not* true, but so far we have concealed that fact from our clients. They go right along pursuing the gospel of Bigger and Better (one of the most fortuitous combinations of words ever dreamed up by our Slogan Department).

Another point that you will do well to note carefully is the confusion of Psychology with Religion. I grant the close connection of the two fields, and I also grant that sound psychology is a useful tool for preparatory work in the larger area. After all, swamps do have to be filled and underbrush does have to be cut down when a person is getting ready to build a house, and proper instruments are timesaving in this spadework. Unfortunately for us, lots of humans realize this fact, so that the jealous hostility that used to prevail between the hierarchs of Psychology and Religion has largely broken down in our day. The present situation might well be described as a state of too eager and still uneasy marriage between these former rivals.

However, all things work together for good if you roll with the punch. Our present strategy in this field is the jujitsu trick of yielding with your opponent's pressure, so that your rival's strength

is used to his own undoing. This completely successful plan of operation has placed psychology upright in the saddle, firmly riding religion. You will immediately note that this is only a particular application of our Basic Procedure A-2.

GHQ is quite positive in its thinking that our ends are served, rather than hindered, when a human is conformed to the fallen world and to the fallen world only. Thus it favors, rather than fears, psychology and tranquilizers and all other things which aim at this subhuman level of adjustment. On the whole, you will do well, then, to further the creation of psychological consultants in the wealthier parishes. In the more normal setup, see to it that your parson limits his counseling as well as his sermons to the psychological level, with a final tag prayer and a pat on the back.

Anything that confines itself to the merely natural level is fundamentally safe for us. The thing to be dreaded is any opening of doors into the supernatural sphere. (This is one reason why you must everlastingly keep them from believing in US. A human being has only three enemies, and I don't mean sickness, death, and taxes; nor poverty, old age, and loneliness. I mean the flesh, the world, and OURSELVES.) When people are limited to the level of the world and the flesh they are far easier to deal with. Let them look within themselves, and around themselves at other people, as long as they live, for in so doing they will never discover what a normal human being can be like. The only normal human being who ever walked the earth after our Great Success did so in Palestine about two thousand years ago. Just keep their eyes and hearts away from Him and you're on safe ground. While humans limit their aspirations to Insurance, Pensions, and Good Will, they can never come to the knowledge of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

One final thought on an allied topic. I must confess (an odious practice) that Intellectualism, or Rationalism, is beginning to become a losing game nowadays. The last strongholds of this magnificent idolatry of the human mind by the human mind are to be found in those indistinguishable cults, Unitarianism and Liberal Judaism, but even the adherents of these ethical culture societies are showing signs of restlessness. They reveal faint signs of realizing that Morality cannot stand on its own feet, and a few of them even seem to sense that the continual proclamation of ethics is not only

barren and futile but actually destructive of the very ends it seeks to further. In any case, the numinous qualities, the sense of awe, a groping for mysticism, some notions about the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty, and similar detestable enormities are showing their ugly little heads all up and down the land.

Ideally, such beginnings of evil as stately religious ceremony, stained-glass windows, and resonant liturgy should be avoided like the plague because they can lead to genuine worship. But I see no long-range hope in this attack, although we shall diligently continue to foster the High Church-Low Church bitterness in every possible denomination, for kicks if nothing else. That cause, however, is essentially lost, for the liturgical revival is upon us to a truly horrid extent, with every human art being pulled up out of the cellar, dusted off, and put to use—sometimes you can hardly distinguish between a Methodist church and a Roman one. This lamentable business will surely continue, if only because it's pretty.

Since we can't lick them we will join them, and that word "pretty" is the clue. Our policy will be to ensure that all ceremony is designed, used, and thought of as being impressive. "Beautiful," "cute," "lovely," "nice," and of course "impressive" are the adjectives you want to hear as the addicts come out the church doors. That will mean that Jones is still essentially worshipping Jones, that all this tremendous machinery is still aimed at him.

The danger lies in the possibility that this stuff might get to be expressive. Expressive of truth, expressive of reality, expressive of mystery—means through which the congregation becomes not a group of spectators being impressed but a body of worshipers who are forgetting themselves by expressing themselves. That would mean they were putting something—and worse yet, Somebody—else at the center. It would mean that people were looking up. And when people are looking up, things for US are looking down.

Toleration

Someday I'd like to give a course of lectures on Human Emotions. Emotions lie at the very heart of our work, and if I do say so myself I've built up quite a reputation in this field. As you may know, the standard works on Rage, Anger, Bitterness, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Murders, and Revellings are all of my composition, and it is a rare issue of *The Pitchfork* that doesn't contain one of my contributions in this area—perhaps you noticed last month my rather searching article on Greed. I am presently engaged in preparing a monograph on Jealousy and in making notes for a work that may eventually open up a whole new approach to Suspicion, Gossip, and Backbiting.

But if you noticed the above-mentioned titles with any care, you perceived the diminuendo involved. You could get your teeth into the early ones, while the later ones are mighty thin soup (although I do love gossip). I hasten to say that this fact merely reflects a change in the temper of the times; it indicates no mellowing in me. I should still love to warm my hands at a burning stake or supervise the boiling in oil of a dish more succulent than French-fried potatoes. I love the lusty possibilities of a vigorous and bracing era; I shall always prefer baked missionary to baked Alaska. But you have to hoist your sail to the wind that blows, and it's a very gentle breeze that now wafts across America. Basically the country is in the doldrums, with the only excitement being provided by a few local twisters. And I say categorically—work within this climate as long as you can. Don't upset the apple cart.

Naturally your American client will indeed have emotions, which will be the most unstable part of his entire make-up and also his

most potent dynamic. And you can still promulgate the notion that his emotions are not to be disciplined—the word to use is “repressed.” Indeed, you must always examine a given emotional situation to see if it presents the opportunity for solid creative work. I’m not taking all your fun away.

Why, I well remember the blissful results I once managed to build up from the tiny opening provided by a minor neighborhood quarrel. As I recall the start of things, it seems that one man’s lawn sprinkler was, once in every slow revolution, tossing a spurt of water over the fence onto his neighbor’s smoking incinerator. Well, it was a sultry Saturday in August, the children were bickering, and the women were a bit out of sorts, so I thought I’d see what I could make of the situation.

The details of the development aren’t important—although I might point out that in these matters it’s invariably wise to call in the police at the proper time; the blue uniform has a catalytic action—but the net result will amuse you. After sides had been fully taken there was a perfect spate of anonymous telephone calls; fourteen families in the block were no longer speaking directly to one another; nobody’s child could play with anybody else’s; one family had moved back to Wyoming; and there had been two divorces. The point, as I am sure you see, is that when you monkey with emotions you must be sure to keep them on the childish level.

Yet for all that can be said on this side of the matter, you are to be everlastingly careful lest you stir up any real adult enthusiasm on any important topic. (There is one major exception to this principle. I’ll outline it in a moment.) Toleration is The Word nowadays. The party line dictates that you foster it to the full, as the best available method to prevent Americans from arriving at a disastrous state of balanced maturity—often called “responsible freedom.”

I myself would go further—indeed, I would go to any lengths to prevent people from growing up emotionally. I would extol Torpor. In my experience, enthusiasm has always proved to be a vital thing that can get out of hand in the most unexpected ways. I remember how I was lolling around in the barbershop one day, examining a battered copy of *Look* while my client was having his hair cut, when the barber began spouting off about the wonderful time he and his wife were having in a Square Dance group they had recently

joined. I was immediately on the alert—after all, I had brought my client's marriage under almost perfect control by a process of inanition. Every night after supper the wife settled down with a magazine and the husband with a bottle of wine, and that was that. Stagnation reigned supreme.

I won't dwell on this case because the memory is still painful—that barber set me back more than a decade. Barbers should keep their mouths shut. The long and short of the matter was that his enthusiasm sold my dying client a bill of goods. He and his wife took up Square Dancing every Friday night, and one thing led to another. As their sluggish blood began to flow, you could actually see them begin to come alive. What with zip in their arteries and the enforced outside contacts, they both began to have opinions and then to discuss opinions. Their horizons widened, they started to see things (both within and around themselves) that needed changing, they began to take constructive steps—oh, nuts.

Beware of enthusiasm. Jehovah's Witnesses are hard to handle because they get all het up; the devotees of the staid sects are most delightfully self-contained. I feel so strongly on this subject that I don't even go along with those theorists who advise you to dissipate your client's enthusiasm on second-rate matters, such as who will pitch the opening game of the Series. My personal opinion is that it's best to short-circuit every commitment of any kind whatever. I base this statement on the well-known fact that if a conviction isn't fed, it dies of malnutrition.

That was opinion, but this is *de fide*: Under no circumstances is your client ever to get involved in any real and compelling Cause. Why, let a tragedy occur down the block and all the neighbors will converge on the dead run, vaulting or knocking down the fences they have laboriously built across the years and shucking off their prejudices as they run.

I suppose you recall from your course in Anatomy that human eyes are set toward the top of the head and point outward. I know I will not be quoted—if I am I will deny the statement, and you will be in trouble—when I say that your Anatomy Professor has a plodding mind, not given to thinking in parables. And so I am sure that he did not point out to you that mental and emotional health in human creatures depends pretty largely upon their following

their physical construction. Upon their looking upward and outward and all around, to put the matter into so many words.

How I hate Causes and Crises, which lead people to do just exactly that, instead of following our advice to keep their gaze turned inward, lovingly fastened upon the supreme triviality in the world—themselves. On the other hand, how deeply pleased I am with the balmy mood of toleration that presently prevails across the length and breadth of America. We have them at the point where they'll tolerate anything at all, as well as anybody at all, and they firmly believe that this state of affairs is highly virtuous. Our Semantics Department is entitled to some of the credit for this fact that no American of any consequence would be caught dead with a "narrow" or a "closed" mind—and I would have made this acknowledgment even if I myself had not been at one time in charge of that important department.

Doubtless you recognize this whole phenomenon as being an interesting by-product of American Big Business, that smoothly oiled machine wherein no friction must be permitted lest it generate heat. Big Business will tell you frankly that the greatest talent it is looking for is the ability to get along with people. This truth must be so familiar to you that I won't labor it. But, since your first client will probably be a youngish man on the way up, it might be well if I list rapidly a series of devices that have been found useful in producing the Always Open Mind.

1. "Don't call us; we'll call you" is absolutely impossible. It's loaded, if only because it's been joked about so often. It's negative, and definitely so. It stands more chance of stirring things up than of soothing them down.

2. "I'll tell him when he comes in" is a dated phrase lacking real force, so it will hardly do. But since it does in its mild way avoid the issue, keep it in mind as a remote possibility.

3. "I'll appoint a committee to look into that." Possible, but not too good. Too definite. The committee will probably be created. It may actually meet, discuss, and render a report.

4. "I'll refer the matter to proper channels." Much better. Basic assumption that the channels already exist, so that no action of any kind is called for.

5. "I'll make a memorandum of it" moves us into the really con-

structive area. It can be improved upon, but it does have a million daily uses.

6. "We must talk about that sometime" is even better. Number 5 does shut the door with your client on the outside. This one leaves both fellows in the same room.

7. "That's a point of view." The finest phrase of all. It absolutely neutralizes without refuting.

I'm sure you see at once how the results of this technique are far more solid than, say, a hasty program that gets your man dubbed "fanatic" or even "crackpot." Oh, that result wouldn't by any means be a consummation to be sneered at. The company would surely lock the fellow up in the cellar, where they figure he couldn't do much harm. This is all right if the discipline permanently buries your man alive or restores him to a sane amiability. But the familiar trouble with giving a dog a bad name is that he may well try to live up to it. Your man could conceivably come to take an inverse pride in what they say about him, and consequently to believe it. In the long run you might have a hopeless individualist on your hands, quite capable of corrupting others.

But before I go further I must fulfill the promise made a few moments ago and allude to the important exception to this whole approach. Under no circumstances should you apply this technique in respect to the racial question that so happily disturbs America. Tolerance is by no means the weapon to use here; in this area we want as much strife (see my standard work on the subject) as you can possibly foment. Patience and the open mind are precisely the elements that will resolve this problem as time moves deliberately on. Therefore, make full use of the NAACP and the Citizens' Councils, and bear heavily on all the evil overtones in the word "gradualism." Taking every precaution against creating too many martyrs of either color, rush into this situation with all the speed and fury that you can muster. Time runs against you here, so hurry.

Incidentally, you might think that this same exception applies to those constant arbitration meetings between Management and Labor, but your conclusions would be hasty. I grant you that you can create a lot of idleness, starve a few people to death, and break some heads and hearts by means of a protracted strike. I also grant you that these are worth-while accomplishments. But the

long pull must also be considered, and in this case takes precedence if possible. The ideal thing to do here is to induce both Champions to acknowledge in their hearts that, after a lot of snorting around the lists and waving to the crowd, they're not going to fight at all. They're going to compromise, if only the other crowd will listen to reason. We love that kind of thing. Such compromise helps create and maintain the climate of opinion I'm talking about.

But I have to hedge here, because you may quite possibly be in for trouble in this field. The time may be passing when, the Champions having finally met in the middle of the field, the exact increase in the hourly wage scale and the consequent increase in the cost per ton could be readily figured out in advance by an objective observer. You see, this entire bill was quite naturally presented to John Doe for ultimate payment, and you are aware of the sensitive nerve which connects John's pocketbook with his vocal cords. Since no opiate can dull these delicate ganglia, the anguished screams of John's vivisection are becoming quite audible nowadays in America. So you may be headed for that second-best situation—a head-on collision between Management and Labor. Oh well. This would admittedly roil the glassy sea of Toleration, but one can do a lot with life's inevitable second-bests. Why, Labor Unions themselves are a second-best. I was sorry to see them come along—Labor's working conditions were quite satisfactorily medieval when the Robber Barons were in control—but we've worked along with them very well. Indeed, our present rapport is so good that there is talk of depriving all American Labor Racketeers of their Mentors. The theory is that these gentlemen don't need our personal guidance any longer. I myself don't go along with this notion, but I admit the strength of the argument. The statistics supporting it are truly formidable.

I apologize for such a jagged interjection into our bland and leisurely meanderings. Let's resume our composure by glancing at some additional measures we have found extremely useful in producing that blessed state wherein nothing ever comes up.

The first is the use of the amiable and noncommittal word wherever possible. "Cool" is a far better word than "cold." "Warmth" is a much better choice than "heat." Always remember that you

are cultivating the art of saying nothing—or as close to nothing as is humanly possible—and choose your words accordingly.

A corollary is the constant use of the comparative degree, to which Americans are pretty thoroughly addicted already. “Cooler”—“warmer”—“lower”—“higher”—these are blessed words. You’ll find the device widely used in advertising. The new model car is “two inches wider.” *Than what* is never stated, nor should it be. This invention of ours is merely designed to make all things as pleasant as soothing sirup. No definite—and certainly no odious—comparisons are involved. But do keep your eye on those little tables wherein Car C, Car F, and Car P are analyzed in parallel columns. This is a potentially dangerous deviant.

Another device is the Cult of the Smile. Some of our more pedantic historians assert that this American fetish had its beginnings in the early toothpaste ads, but I don’t know that that matters. The only thing that really matters is that they all be kept smiling, no matter what is going on. I say “kept” smiling, because you’ll find them all making that facial grimace when you arrive—they smile while singing, while drinking beer, while skin-diving, and above all when making the sales pitch. You may, in fact, have to look twice in order to distinguish the body of the Cheshire cat at all, so nearly have they all vanished into thin air, leaving only this insipid trace. Keep them smiling. Everybody would be most happy if America slipped away not with a bang, nor even with a whimper, but with a smile.

Finally, I call your attention to that method supremely adapted to use in a democracy—the Discussion Group. It’s based on several premises, including the fiction of “the more the merrier,” the compulsive desire to offend nobody, and the pretense that there is no authority. “Since nobody knows anything and there are innumerable sides to all things, let’s go hand in hand into the woods.” We have this technique flourishing in America under various names—Buzz Groups, Brainstorming Sessions, Round Table Discussions, Panels, Trustees’ Meetings, and the like.

Of course there is some legitimacy and some danger in the Town Meeting, the Staff Meeting, and even in the pooling of adult resources that can—even if it usually doesn’t—result from a Discussion Group. When I’m dealing with responsible, informed, and/or dedi-

cated adults, I try to avoid all formal and informal discussion—why run the severe danger of spreading this stuff around? Indeed, in any gathering some of the people present really have some factual lumber in their heads, and so from time to time a Discussion Group will actually get some sort of leaky structure built. It's not in the same world with the creative product of some solitary thinker locked up in a lonely room, but it sometimes scratches a surface truth in a compromise sort of a way.

Logically the long-run counterattack would be to raise up an entire generation that actually doesn't know anything because it has been entirely reared by this method. I am among those of US who feel that this is an impossible achievement—I know too well how the American pendulum swings, and in addition I note an ominous tendency which I shall discuss in my next lecture—but our dreamers have actually set up some pilot plants to achieve this *reductio ad absurdum*. You might look in some day on the Seminars conducted by the first graders at Babel Private School. You will be delighted at the wee wisdom they reveal and achieve. You will be amazed at how smoothly they apply the techniques of non-directed guidance to each other. You will be fascinated at the way they pile zero upon zero, achieving the inevitable total.

You will long for the day when these students reach their maturity. But my fear is that we won't be able to keep Teacher faithful to our principles. Already she is surfeited and is wondering if she could do something more constructive with solid drill on the multiplication tables. I doubt that we'll be able to keep her innocent and dewy-eyed.

Authority

I promised in my last lecture that I'd indicate a threatening cloud on the American horizon. At present it's no bigger than a man's hand and there is some high-level thinking that we may be able to dissipate it, but I for one am not sanguine. I feel that there is grave danger in overplaying the Cult of Amiability, and that you may be in for a reversion to a rather old-fashioned state of affairs. I refer to the simple, straightforward appeal to legitimate authority.

By the way, since you know how I feel about "responsible freedom," I assume you realize that by "appeal to authority" I don't mean the simple and craven desire to have one's neurotic mind made up for one—to be told what to do, and when, and how. There's a whole lot of that in America, but my only objection is that there isn't more. No, by "authority" I mean the real McCoy. The recognition that truth exists, that some people have got hold of a piece of it, and that it makes a lot of sense to ask them directly about it.

I wish people would be content with ignorance or prejudice. Or with rumor—rumor is the sort of thing I can really go for. But wishes aren't horses, and certain signs indicate to me that you may find yourselves up against this definite and pernicious business of legitimate authority in full-blown form. A silly example is that commercial which begins with the platitudinous major premise, "Physicians are men who know medicine." I'll admit that the commercial weasels a bit as it goes along and that it doesn't end with an absolutely dogmatic order to do what the doctor says, although it does come mighty close. I'll also admit that when the commercial comes to its end (they actually do end), a million people don't rush right out to the All-Nite Drugstore to buy the pain killer.

They have found a simpler way to end the suffering. They turn the switch all the way to the left, yawn, and go to bed.

All the same, in this sort of thing there does stand, stark naked and unblushing, the direct appeal to legitimate authority, and so I'm going to have to indicate a couple of ways to corrupt this sort of dogmatism. Without any question, the soundest approach is to overplay the hand—to blow up the balloon until it bursts. I realize that you may have studied this method in detail in your course on Techniques, but a word of repetition is never amiss—especially since the device lends itself so admirably to dealing with authority.

In illustrating the method, I'll stick with that commercial and use doctors for my diagnostic purpose. Now I know that the medical men crop up in these lectures fairly frequently, but I wouldn't want you to infer that the profession overawes me. Quite the contrary. Some of my best friends are doctors—and so are many of my worst enemies. They recur in these talks simply because they bulk so large in America. This is not merely because all humans over the age of forty are basically a physical maintenance problem or even because all Americans blithely and consistently ignore the known rules of health, but primarily because of the American cults of youth and beauty.

To return. In sober truth nobody knows better than doctors do how inexact a science medicine actually is. All good doctors know how little they know (a very dangerous point of view) and realize that they are fighting with a child's wooden sword against all the powers of corruption we can throw at the human race. And fight they do, with incredible dedication, at all hours of the day and night. Sometimes, to get rid of them and their example, you seem to have no recourse beyond killing them off. I can't really recommend the technique, however. It's essentially a counsel of despair—death, unfortunately, is not the final good. Besides, you always have to think about the people who are left behind. Humans have a regrettable tendency to hero worship, and I have often had occasion to notice that a dead lion can be more dangerous than a living dog.

I do wish that some of you would look further into the possibilities of malpractice suits in dealing with physicians—the gimmick was beginning to look quite promising when I had to abandon it

because of being called to wider fields of service. Through a couple of judicious suits I had induced enormous caution throughout two entire Medical Associations, and I had persuaded at least one prominent practitioner to abandon charity work entirely—he had noticed that the charity patient was the one who usually sued. Do give this a real go, and make sure to keep me posted on your progress.

You may be sure that Down Here we shall continue with our policy of releasing two new diseases from Pandora's Box every time the men in white (all wearing green now) find out how to deal with one of the old kind. This is one of the reasons why the best doctors respect us almost as furiously as they hate us—they know that we have nearly infinite new diseases still up our sleeves. A bacteriologist in Dallas was positively aghast last year when in the course of his research he discovered twenty-four new viruses that no one had ever heard of before. Well, he doesn't know the half of it yet. Oh, naturally all doctors are well acquainted with the involvement of the human body in the Fall of Man—they see it daily, and it makes them sick at heart. But just let them wait. Most of the rot hasn't yet been released, because it hasn't yet been necessary.

But let's get back on the main line. In spite of all I've been saying, it should be quite easy to make infallible authorities out of doctors, first in the eyes of laymen and then rather speedily in their own eyes. Indeed, the seed is in the ground already. The populace shows many a sign of wanting to cringe, hat in hand, at a respectful distance, waiting for a crumb to fall. With a few more puffs we could have a fully developed mythology, in which doctors would be supermen of occult power sitting majestically behind omniscient desks or stalking omnisciently down majestic corridors.

Americans are fond of talking about the hold that the medieval priesthood had over king and peasant. Certainly, certainly. In destroying priestcraft we used the very method I'm now describing. The medicine man in modern America stands ready for the same treatment if it becomes necessary. So keep watching that cloud on the horizon, and if it continues to gather, you will know what to do.

If I myself were to have this privilege, I might well begin not

with the doctor himself but with his secretary. Perhaps as a starter I'd have her schedule too many appointments. This would keep a lot of people waiting and it would run the danger of making some of them sore, but it has fine long-run advantages. The sight of a lot of docile folk waiting humbly outside the closed sanctum is rather impressive and really outweighs the impatience of the few egotists who think that their time is as important as anybody else's and who pride themselves on keeping an appointment at two-thirty if it is scheduled for two-thirty.

Additionally, this approach would harry the doctor, who would ultimately crack down on his secretary and order her to spread things out a bit. Now I would have a situation where the cowed secretary, in order to be on the safe side and at the same time take care of the load, decides to schedule appointments not less than six weeks in advance. This is triply impressive—to the patient, to the doctor, and to the secretary herself.

The patient concludes that he is in the hands of the most sought-after authority in the entire Southwest and joyfully endures his misery.

The doctor gets a big kick out of tossing off *bon mots* like, "You know, if I never took on another patient I'd still know exactly what I'd be doing every hour of every day for the next two years."

The secretary falls in line when patients begin to telephone, saying, "Please don't bother the doctor—I know how busy he is—but maybe you could find out about that lab report on my blood sugar." Upon the conferring of this informal medical degree, we are really in business. After a few more deft touches the doctor is as inaccessible as God because the secretary fancies herself in the role of St. Peter.

Now I would really begin to huff and to puff, aiming to inflate both of these immortals to the point where they were first brusque, then overbearing, and finally arrogant. A good move in this direction might be to have the secretary change her own telephone to an unlisted number. In short order, the patient would begin seriously to wonder if he had any personal claim to his own familiar flesh, tortured by his own familiar hemorrhoids. The doctor seems to regard his body as his own private laboratory specimen, not to be discussed with its alleged owner, "And I'm sure he knows what he's

doing. It was a week ago Tuesday that he examined me, and I haven't heard from his secretary so far, but I'm sure that in a few days——"

At this stage in the game there are, of course, no house calls at all. The victim would be dispatched by telephone to the hospital, where he would be charted on five successive mornings by five different and mysterious young men with stethoscopes, not one of whom would ever reappear. Then would begin the process of waiting for an audience with The Man Himself. "But don't you fret, honey. Doctor might stop in to see you tomorrow afternoon. Doctor makes his rounds on Fridays as a rule. I know he realizes you're here, because he told me only last week that you were an interesting case. Oh, maybe I shouldn't have said that."

For a while some determined iconoclast might try to blur this picture by crawling to the golf course on a Thursday afternoon to have his broken leg set, but we would speedily reach the time when nobody would dare to have his appendix rupture except by appointment. At this point, somebody Down Here would pull the string. We have experts who have devoted their entire careers to the study of Timing.

You may object that by the application of this technique we cut our own throats and bring our best work tumbling down. Come, come. Under socialized medicine you would merely shift your attack to the next logical candidate—atomic scientists might well be the proper selection. They're a bad influence in America, too. They display purpose, a frightening (to other Americans) intellectual discipline, and a mysterious mumbo-jumbo jargon that ensures popular respect. Above all, they are buoyantly riding the wave of the future. Oh, I realize that the expression "know-how" dropped out of fashion in America when the Russians demonstrated that they too knew how, but I derive no satisfaction from the priority of Sputnik. It made the local scientists sore, and that's always a mistake when dealing with Americans. In my considered opinion you're about to see some *real* American fireworks.

But I'm not trying to pinpoint anything now. All I'm saying is that in dealing with legitimate authority an excellent method is to play up power and privilege, confident that it will corrupt in the long run even when obtained through unwanted and false adulation.

So run it into the ground. Rather, place it far above ground. Move it into the astral sphere. Deify it. When the crash comes, great is the fall thereof. The resultant bewilderment, anger, and cynicism are spread all over the landscape in exact proportion to the height of the structure that had previously towered to the sky.

The second way to corrupt legitimate authority is almost as much fun. It is managed by a twist of the wrist—you take a recognized expert on Astronomy and have him pontificate about Poetry. You induce a world-renowned architect to lay down the law about farming. You get a Bishop to air his profound knowledge of nuclear fission.

It isn't hard to do. (Oh, once upon a time there was a famous historian who, upon being asked, "What are your views on capital punishment?", replied, "Naturally I have views on the subject, but they are personal opinions based upon limited study. I prefer not to discuss the matter for publication." But this was once upon a time, and the historian wasn't an American.) In tempting Americans, a good first step is to have the reporters meet your Bishop at the boat when he is returning from a trip abroad, get his various opinions on assorted subjects, and then quote him in the evening paper. "Bishop Lance also stated that, in his considered opinion, a Summit Meeting at this particular time should place high on its agenda the subject of fall-out over equatorial Africa. He pointed out that these defenseless folk, lacking representation in high places—"

Well, the bishop is considerably surprised as he begins to read the sober misconstruction of a somewhat jocular remark he tossed off while waiting to get through Customs. But the more he reads the interview, the better he likes it. He tosses the paper aside laughingly and attacks his lamb chop, but a sermon developing his alleged thought begins to form in his head. After all, the people will expect it.

The next morning he has his attention called to some laudatory remarks in the third paragraph of that well-known column, "Pundits and People," about his visionary statesmanship. The paragraph has far more savor to him than does his boiled egg. When the feature editor telephones, asking for an audience, the bishop cancels all his scheduled appointments in order to spend the entire morning in the library reading up on his new specialty. By now he definitely

enjoys being an authority, and you are off and flying. An interesting by-product is that his own proper business, in which he is an authority, languishes.

This particular switch, by the way, brings us nearly full circle. As I indicated in my previous lecture, we are at present working toward the happy time when nobody has any definite opinion about anything. This is such a short journey from the spot where everybody has views about everything that the distance can be covered in one stride, and thus I bring you back to where you came in.

Vocation

It gives me great joy to inform you that we have persuaded almost all Americans that the sense of personal destiny is an infantile delusion, unworthy of the emotionally mature. Indeed, I think it can safely be said that they all regard the whole concept of individual vocation as a medieval superstition, spawned by that greatest dragon of them all, Wishful Thinking. Why, our work in this line has been so effective that not one American in ten even so much as knows what the word "vocation" really means. The personal God being thus effectively abolished, it is inevitable that you always find these lost souls congregated in vast amorphous mobs, each individual (sic) wearing the same clothes, the same haircut, and the same vacant expression as he imbibes the currently fashionable drink and voices the current platitudes.

This familiar result, while boring, is magnificent, not simply because it makes economic opportunists of them, or (in a recent jargon) "other-directed" people of them, or even that it makes cynics of them, but that in the strictest sense of the word it makes nonentities of them. It's the absolute reversal of individual creation, and hence it is the pinnacle of our success. We exist, of course, to destroy hope, faith, love, adventure, and all those other joys of living that should not even be named among us. If, however, we destroy Living itself, then we have arrived. For then we have done something that even God Himself either cannot or will not do. Is it the ultimate mystery that God does not annihilate?

But I grow rhapsodical, and there's work to be done. So let's come down to the plodding level of a mere lecturer and point out to you that the secret of any happy, purposeful human life is en-

tirely open and entirely simple: All a human being has to do is find his personal vocation and then follow it.

One would think that even humans would have difficulty in cluttering up a matter of that essential simplicity. On the contrary, they display genius in confounding this secret. Until a certain level of spiritual development is reached (which happens, statistically, in only six cases in a hundred), we don't have to do any work at all in this basic field.

So curious is this matter, so hard is it for us to understand, that we shall go into it here in some detail—incidentally, we have now reached the breaking point in this course, when we move from a consideration of the American Climate to an analysis of the American Himself. And you will do well to pay close attention, if only because many young and unseasoned tempters have on innumerable occasions dabbled with a human being who was missing his vocation by a country mile and didn't stand a chance of finding it. The lost wanderer, obviously, should have been left alone in his darkness. But no. Some smart-aleck tempter, still crimson behind the ears, had to go and make the person even more unbearably discontented—and the discontent, in time, brought that person back to his vocation, to his fulfillment, and to his Happiness.

Don't begin to make those sly faces, which indicate that you intend to turn me over to the Get-Sappo as a proven heretic. I know, far better than you do, that bringing discontent to humans is usually very sound work. But there are times and places. Have you never heard of the nun, headmistress at a girls' school, who was approached one day in the middle of the winter term by an Indignation Committee of the students, whose spokesman stoutly recited the group gripe about weekend restrictions and other sadistic enormities, ending up with the catchall sentence, "And, Sister, we feel you ought to know that all the girls in this school are dissatisfied." To which the nun replied, "At their age they ought to be."

You have to know at least as much as nuns do, so therefore now hear this: If a human's discontent is caused by his failure to find his vocation, just let him alone. No amount of tiny irksome pinpricks of discontent can possibly add up to the basic misery of living apart from one's intended purpose. Have you got that? I'll repeat it slowly, for your notebooks. If a person has not found his vocation, just let

him alone. He's miserable enough as it is. He's not simply going to Hell; he's *in* Hell. Surely you realize that all the road to Hell is Hell?

Now that you have the basic point, it might be well to remind you of the major ways in which a human finds his vocation, so that you will be alert to aid him in missing it. You will note, as I go down the list, that it isn't easy for a human to get off the track. But take heart—I repeat that ninety-four people in every hundred achieve the difficulty.

Vocation is found:

1. By doing at the moment what one ought to be doing. For example, in youth by going to school, obeying one's parents, brushing one's teeth, building huts in the woods, playing hooky, wondering, reading, resisting but nevertheless taking dancing lessons, lying on one's back staring at clouds, fighting, breaking one's arm, disemboweling crawfish, doing what the gang is doing, telling dirty jokes, saying one's terrified prayers. The antidote is rather difficult during the dreadful period called "youth," but it gets progressively easier with the years. It consists, naturally, in leading your client to do something other than what he should be doing at that given moment. This is our Basic Procedure A-1.

2. Through having parents with their ears, eyes, and hearts open. Any perceptive parent can tell in general what his child is like and what he should do, and this is one of the main reasons for parents. Hence the importance of broken families, of cocktail parties, of multitudinous affairs that mother or father have to attend to. Any effort that prevents the members of a family from coming in contact with each other is well directed and will bear fruit a hundredfold—pardon the expression. (By the way, there's quite a beginning movement in America back to "the dignity and sanctity of the family"—yes, I'm old-fashioned, as I know you know, and I often use old-fashioned terminology. Many a mother is seriously wondering whether she's going to too many Cola Parties, doing too much Civic Work, involved in too many Committees—that sort of thing. It's true that not many are taking remedial steps, but it's unhealthy even to have them wonder. Keep your eyes constantly open to this threat.)

3. Through paying attention to the distilled wisdom of human history. Guides like those detestable Ten Commandments, those

Beatitudes, that Golden Rule, and such like must therefore be low-rated, or dubbed impractically idealistic, or otherwise set aside by us. One of the handiest methods is the suggestion that this winnowed and tested nugget applies to the other guy, but not to me.

4. Through aptitude tests and vocational tests, which do have a limited general validity, although they cannot compare with item Number 2 above. (Some of our more amusing spare-time employment lies in instilling false standards of "success" in the minds of the psychologists who create these tests. For example, when we induce them to hold in view a certain idea of the qualities required in a successful clergyman, whereas the actual qualities are quite the reverse, the results are interesting when the Bishop reviews the applicant's score. They get increasingly interesting as the searching years go by.)

5. Through prayer. Fortunately, very few humans realize this fact, or practice it if they do realize. However, if you actually find a human asking in prayer what his vocation is, be alert to the danger and try to keep him talking—"whining" is a better word. He is asking the Person Who knows (I've already stated that Parents know these things) and Who will tell him if he will only listen. Just keep him from listening. (Naturally this advice applies to the whole subject of prayer. Few Americans have yet discovered that prayer is the most satisfactory of all grown-up, two-way, genuine conversations, and it would be criminal negligence to let them find out.)

6. Through trial and error, and new trial and success. The fact is that when a human is in the wrong vocation he will find invisible walls looming up and invisible doors closing. The wise and patient human will keep on trying. Somewhere along the line as he climbs and batters and digs and tries successive blind alleys, a door swings silently open, his further difficulties will be challenges rather than barriers, and he will come into his fulfillment. The usual antidote is to induce discouragement or, if possible, despair. Another useful approach is to load the victim with obligations, to get him involved and committed to the hopelessly impossible. At the very least, to make it difficult, through his pride if at all possible, to try something else. In every available manner, induce him to quit his struggles. "What's the use?" is one of the loveliest phrases in the language. Its only danger is summarized in the famous phrase, "Man's extremity

is God's opportunity"—a horrible truth that I shall discuss at some length in tomorrow's lecture.

7. Through being in a process. This is almost indistinguishable from Number 6, but is slightly different in that it brings in the activity of Someone Else. You might say that this is the combination of Numbers 6 and 5, viewed from the human side, and that the Holy Spirit begins His cursed dabbling, when you look at this matter from the other side. In further explanation, I'll point out that it hardly matters what a human being does at a given moment as he searches for his vocation, so long as he does *something*. To put this another way, it hardly matters what direction he starts off in, so long as he does start off and does keep going. This is true because of the damnable propensity for Divine Omnipotence to interfere with Human Freedom—God has so stacked the cards that it is practically impossible for Him to lose.

He actually *is* their wise and loving Father, and so He makes a suggestion to His child (this is called His "prevenience." I can readily think of a better word). If the dismal creature responds on the plus side of the scale in any slightest degree, God is in business. The Hell of it is that it doesn't matter in the least if God's original suggestion is totally misunderstood, or interpreted on a hopelessly low level—as in the case of St. Francis when he was told to "build My church." The fact of the affirmative human response, however feeble and however wrong, is all that matters. Given this hesitant "yes" of the human will, a direction pointed north can very easily be brought in a few years around to due south by the Guiding One.

This is totally unfair in an orderly universe; it's more like Alice in Wonderland. Sometimes, in low moments, it can make you question if your own work is worth-while. Nevertheless, we do have our counterattacks. The best one, by all odds, is to devote our energies toward keeping the client standing still. "Don't just do something—stand there!" Let him use his energy (Energy isn't merely the key to life; it's life itself) in wringing his hands, or crying aloud, or drinking hard liquor, or sitting in a chair waiting for light to shine or a millionaire to come visiting. *Anything*—so long as it is nothing. So long as your client doesn't get into a process that moves toward something because it proceeds from however

feeble an act of his will. In that process he will be met by Somebody Who will take him by the hand and lead him whithersoever He will.

I'm sure you know my fondness for fences—areas roped off and labeled “No Trespassing.” Humans are fond of fences, too, thinking that they keep a lot of annoying things at a safe distance. However, our subject of Vocation reveals “fences” in a clearer light, indicating that they are usually prisons. I do love prisons.

Self-discipline

One of the happier by-products of America's long-continued financial prosperity is the fact that our problems in connection with human self-discipline have been vastly simplified.

Before we consider this subject directly, however, we must point out with emphasis that the indefinite continuance of America's economic prosperity cannot be presumed upon. Some of our younger tempters, whose experience has been limited to the present era and whose vitality has been sapped by the ease of operation, have been detected in this error. Fourteen of them were recently reassigned, for refresher courses in the facts of life, to such squalid places as New York City's lower East Side, the coal-mining area of eastern Kentucky, and the Negro slums of Jacksonville. They will relearn—or else—that while “too much money and too little self-discipline” is admittedly a favorable atmosphere for our work, nevertheless it is not a sufficient formula for human destruction. Grinding poverty, bone weariness, hopeless despair—these things, too, have their great uses.

Indeed, I am permitted to divulge that it is our intention shortly to return American economy to the situation that obtained during the early 1930s. It is felt in High Quarters that, with two generations now ripe and soft, it is time to shake the tree. Exactly when the crash will come is known definitely only in GHQ. But already the wind had begun to blow gently, so that the present American mood is one of uncertainty, foreboding, and worry.

This unsettled climate of opinion is always our most potent external aid. Sharp swings of the pendulum are splendidly upsetting elements, and we shall always use them in our operations, but they

necessarily contain the danger of bringing people up against reality. And this confrontation with reality is ever to be avoided at all costs. It can't be said too often that diabolic temptation must always be concerned with what might be, rather than with what is (Procedure A-i). Who cares how fervently a person prays, "Thy will be done," so long as in his heart he adds, "Tomorrow," or "When my circumstances change"? The only place and time and manner in which a human can serve God is here and now and as he is. Just keep him from that—it's astonishingly easy to do—and you've got it made.

But I digress. Let me return to my subject by reminding you that the external conditions which surround a human life—conditions of poverty or prosperity, sickness or health—are extremely powerful but never basic. Even the American Climate, favorable as it is, will not ensure damnation. We like to delude humans into believing that environmental factors are all-important, thus inducing them toward supineness and despair on the one hand, or to reckless change of jobs, wives, etc., on the other hand. But we ourselves know better, as do a very few humans who have learned "both how to abound and how to be in want." (Believe me, these are the only ones who *really* know this truth. You'll hear a lot of lip service in America about the dignity of the individual, but it's mostly eye-wash. The fellow who is saying it is probably running for office. If he shortly begins to talk about civil rights, he certainly is.)

I apologize for getting off the track again, but I know so much that I can hardly avoid it. Well, I was saying that the essential problem for humans is within. That no matter what their outward circumstances of the moment may be, we shall always be involved in preventing their self-discipline. Let's stay with this topic awhile.

A disciplined human being is, with one exception (the self-righteous), extremely difficult to deal with. All cases involving disciplined human beings are reserved for the personal attention of the BTOs. Your entire aim, until you may be deemed skilled enough for membership in that select society—an unlikely prospect—is to prevent people from becoming themselves. That is to say, from becoming disciplined.

One of the soundest principles to follow in this work is fostering the lie that self-expression, rather than self-discipline, is the great desideratum. You and I know, of course, that there must *be* a Self

before it can be expressed. We know that this Self is produced by the interaction of that damnable thing, Grace, and the diligent efforts of the individual. You would think that this is the most obvious fact in the world, as indeed it is. But the human race, since that delightful affair in the Garden of Eden, has acquired positive genius in overlooking the obvious.

Although I intensely dislike people who read books, I sometimes think it is unfortunate that Rousseau and other writers of his sort are not read any more. However, their place has been adequately taken over by the Progressive Educators. And the fact remains that Americans, without significant exception, are convinced in their hearts that perfect human living can be achieved only in a lounge chair on a coral atoll in the South Pacific. Where do all Americans think they want to live? In fact, where are they flocking by the thousands? To southern Florida and southern California.

Your American client is predisposed in favor of ease, sunshine, and self-expression. He equates hard work and self-discipline with the distasteful, the frustrating, and even the diabolic (ha). Foster this predisposition. With every power at your disposal keep him thinking that when he is working he is essentially being robbed of his birthright; that he is only really living when he has come home at the end of the day and is sprawled out with the evening paper, the television, and a martini going simultaneously. Keep him thinking that next summer's vacation is real and deserved, while today's labor is imposed and off the track. Keep him thinking that real life, which will give him everything on a silver platter, lies over there, just tantalizingly beyond his reach until he becomes very rich.

You and I know, of course, that life will not give you anything unless you take it. That "God helps those who help themselves." That rewarding human life goes uphill. Therefore we provide the downhill.

It's exceedingly curious, and highly satisfying, that the human actually knows this, too. Watch him on the practice tee, hitting five-iron shots by the hour. Practicing. Indulging in self-discipline. Acquiring most laboriously the freedom to play golf.

Listen to him—it often sounds like Home—practicing finger exercises on the piano. Observe the long stumbling years of diligent application that lie behind facility in reading. You can't prevent

humans from doing this sort of thing, so don't waste your time trying too hard. (Oh, it's quite possible and entirely permissible to do a bit of undercutting, and sometimes the results are delightful. For example, I know of an English teacher who blew out his brains when he learned that the "difficult" words were being written out of Huckleberry Finn—an unfortunate aspect of this was that he didn't live to see the book banned entirely, but you can't have everything. And there is significant victory when a headmaster can be induced, after a session with Mama, to say to his math teacher, "I don't see why you have to give twenty similar problems as homework. After all, if the boy does one problem correctly he knows how to handle the process." It's also a sound achievement when little Freddie, who is about to enter a new school for reasons that I won't investigate here, scores 49 on that school's entrance exam in History, after having averaged 96 in the subject at his former establishment. The principal of the old will speedily write to the headmaster of the new, saying, among other things, "I admire your standards, but I don't see how you can maintain them in these days.")

Yes, it's legitimate to work toward the happy time when nobody can get his teeth into anything. One approach to this end is by predigesting everything so that it can be sucked through a straw, and the other method is extracting teeth one by one. But this sort of thing will always be secondary. Your main objective is to keep your client from realizing that in Real Life—as opposed to games and other "parts" of life—freedom, skill, enjoyment, and self-expression are possible only to the disciplined.

Semantics are useful tools in this work, as we hinted above. The average human confuses "practice" with "drudgery." "Effortful" with "distasteful." "Restraint" with "frustration." "Not yet" with "never." It's exceedingly fortunate that this is so, because the human race has a perverse stubborn streak that at times drives me absolutely wild. They dignify this stubbornness by naming it perseverance, but whatever you call it, I hate it. It's a vital spark inside them that is devilishly hard to stamp out. For years you beat on it and pour buckets of cold water over it. Then, if you take too facile a view, you ease off thinking the fire is out—and immediately you discover that it was only smoldering. Something blew gently on it and fanned it back to life again, and back they go to their pitiful discipline.

"Something" blew on it? Huh. You know Who that is. And let me tell you something else about the unfair tactics of our Opponent. I had a client once who stubbornly kept on beating his head against a solid stone wall in the forlorn hope that there might be a door through the thing. Well, there wasn't any door there, and that's why I had suggested the endeavor. This thing was no opportunity. It was an unyielding barrier a mile thick. I tell you *there absolutely wasn't any door there at all*—forgive me, I didn't mean to scream. But the miserable wretch *created* a door by dint of his very perseverance. Perhaps it's better to say that he got some help from the Other Side—over There they like to mess around with closed doors, too. Anyway, as this bloody client staggered through I distinctly heard a Voice saying "Come up higher."

You everlastingly have to watch this thing called Perseverance—that's why I everlastingly come back to it. It's the greatest single quality that a human being can bring to life. No, don't give me any copybook comeback about Charity. I know all about Charity, you fool. What's your name, anyway? Accidie? You mean it really is? I'll remember it easily.

Certainly Charity is the greatest virtue, Accidie, but they have it *given* to them. Remember? Somebody pours a little water on their head and mumbles a few words, and there they are, simply running over with Charity—and with Faith and Hope besides.

But perseverance, now. I could read you a few words about perseverance—something to the effect that he who endures to the end will be saved—but I'd rather put it in my own words: If your client keeps getting up and staggering forward every time he gets knocked down, you'd better watch out. Anybody whose life's motto is "Keep on keeping on" is dangerously close to getting somewhere. After all, "what is a saint but a sinner who kept on trying?"

That phrase is so perfect I wish I could claim I had coined it. But your erudition reduces me to the next best thing—I proudly admit that I stole it.

Marriage

You'd think that the Creator would have been satisfied after having brought us pure spirits into being. Or, to stretch a point, after having made the animals. But no. So insatiable is He that He went on to invent that appalling hybrid of spirit and flesh, the human being. That revolting hairy monster, that gross caricature—oh well, I must contain myself. Human beings are here, and they're here to stay unless we can induce them to blow themselves up.

(Incidentally, considerable study is being devoted to this possibility. But we must face the fact, and acknowledge that even this end of the matter probably wouldn't do much good. The Creator would undoubtedly go to work with another amoeba and begin the whole process over again. And the possibility remains that He might do a better job the second time around. After all, since the Incarnation He has inside knowledge of the human situation—an unfair advantage over us, I admit, but one that I'm not anxious to share. Who in Hell wants to become a human being?)

The other mistake made when the human race was invented lies in the fact that God then took a whole and broke it into halves. He made both men and women. In so doing He saddled these half-alive people with the job—or “privilege,” as some of them call it—of having to work at their own creation.

The broken halves have extremely jagged edges, I'm happy to say, and since this is the whole point about marriage I'll return to it in a moment. But first I want to underline the fact that no human “individual” of either sex is a complete person in himself, as you and I are. He's only a half-person who needs his supplement in order to be himself. The sheer physical structure of the sexes is a

parable of the fact that each must interpenetrate the other. In a marriage that actually works out, a creative miracle occurs whose result is rather hard to put into words. One might say that the two halves then fuse into one, and yet at the same time each becomes himself. However you describe this dreadful state of affairs, it is to be avoided at all costs.

Fortunately, the line of cleavage between men and women is so jagged and so tender that it's extremely difficult to fit the edges together again smoothly, and quite impossible to do so without great pain. As the dejected young clergyman said when he reluctantly realized that eighty-six per cent of the marriages in his flock could easily blow up in his face at any moment, "Men and women are so different that they should never get married."

Your course in Human Anatomy has pointed out some of these differences between the sexes. Naturally the structural items discussed at that time were largely of the surface variety, chiefly useful for purposes of identification, but even those gross items have enormous potential for the temptation of the very young.

Which brings us to the United States, for the very young of all chronological ages are precisely the folk you will be dealing with in America. You simply must not overlook the uses of secondary sex characteristics in your American matrimonial counseling, even though you yourself fail to appreciate the erotic compulsion that, say, certain rounded areas of female flesh excite in the American male. But they do, they do. I remember a young man whose real reason for living in New Hampshire was that the mountains there reminded him of breasts and buttocks.

I realize that fleshy temptation is the most boring part of our work, but at the same time we must make full use of all the tools at our disposal. Ever keep in mind that it's the end that matters, rather than the means to that end. A true professional, master of every trick of the trade, is quite satisfied with workmanlike short cuts just so long as they bring the desired results. So in America, which is wholly given over to the Cult of Youth, we adapt ourselves and make full use of the temptations of youth. We make sure not to overlook the female bosom—an impossibility in any case, and I don't mean simply during August at the beaches. That anatomical feature is equally prominent in February at the Winter Carnival,

for the greatest uplift work in America is being done, not by the Salvation Army, but by the brassière business. Therefore, much as you would prefer more subtle approaches, keep your hand in on this firm foundation. If a simple case of adultery will serve to consummate your ends, why look further?

Indeed, since the Biological Trap is the absolute basis of all American marriages, with a little diligence you can see to it that the only level of real union between Mr. and Mrs. Jones is the sheerly sexual one. The results upon the marriage, and upon each of the partners, are rewarding when the sexual drive begins to peter out as the couple approaches fifty years of age. You'd think that they would be relieved and delighted that this tyranny was now overpast, but in so thinking you'd be wrong. Whole industries in America—and the most thriving industries at that—are based upon your error. Body is always the most fundamental fact of all human existence, and this is true *par excellence* in that adolescent quagmire, the United States. Hence the capital of the United States—Hollywood—is the absolute mecca for every body in the world.

For all that, it does remain true that biceps and mammary glands are only the surface beginnings of the yawning distinctions between men and women. Other and more subtle opportunities lie in their other differing glandular structures, their differing cultural conditionings, their differing maturity rates, their vastly differing psychologies, their wholly differing sets of values. All of this you have studied in your course on General Human Phenomena. In this context I simply remind you to read over your notes taken in that course, and when you come to a specific point—for example, that women take everything personally, while men can generalize—write in your margin that famous French phrase, “Vive la difference!” Or our own succinct war cry, “Ah ha!”

I chose the above example because the handiest non-sexual way to louse up any marriage is by way of accentuating and particularizing the general and fundamental war between the sexes. By making their differences drive them apart rather than bring them together.

A bit of a digression may help clarify this point. The truth of the matter is, of course, that all men are more or less alike and all women are more or less identical. As a corollary, almost any male

could fulfill himself in marriage with almost any female, and vice versa. This fact is rather awkwardly to the fore in cultures where ultimate marriages are arranged between infants still in the cradle, but fortunately we have managed to make this whole thought repulsive to Americans. They are addicted to the Romantic Delusion—the notion implicit in every movie and story that somewhere there is the one perfect mate. Find him or her (in the stories they do, after three trifling difficulties) and live happily ever after. So all Americans go around dreaming of the Prince Charming whose kiss—and only whose kiss—will and can awaken Sleeping Beauty.

I have already discussed the truth in the Sleeping Beauty legend—that the two *sexes* have to “kiss” in order to come alive—so now let's get down to cases. Hold in your mind any truism, say that mature humans like to devote themselves to their work, but that males see their job as centering outside the home and females as within it. The scene is Suburbia, the time five-thirty on a Thursday afternoon. Adam has come home from work with a bulging brief case in order to get ready for the meeting of the Sales Department tomorrow morning and has completely forgotten the general talk at breakfast about painting the small bedroom some day soon. Eve is slightly pregnant and has looked forward all day to Adam's fulfillment of his definite breakfast promise to get the new baby's room painted tonight.

But do I have to go into all the ghastly details of the dialogue that begins almost immediately after his coming-home kiss? Do we have to listen to the voices rise as each side states its case over and over? Do we have to watch him slam the paper down as the slow tears begin to form in her eyes? Indeed, do we have to be particularly alert this evening, once having set the stage in the morning? I think not. It will be sufficient to be a mere observer, for each partner is certain—unaided—to personalize the general and to hurl at his particular mate the entire list of “faults” that characterize the baffling, maddening, opposite sex.

Oh, if the situation begins to bog down after some forty minutes of this sort of thing, it will be useful—and not dangerous in the least—to stir things up again by the insinuation of some such phrase as

"If it weren't for women, men would still be living in caves, dressed in skins and happily tossing gnawed bones over their shoulders." The statement happens to be a general truth, but in the prevailing non-philosophic circumstances it becomes a renewed personal accusation. So long as you get the accents right it doesn't even matter which person makes the remark, although, on the whole, Eve is the slightly better choice. Don't disturb yourself about this, however. Just get the words said, add two martinis, and stir. Matters will come to life again. The war between the sexes, conducted by these two champions, will rage until ten-thirty. The brief case will not be opened, and the room will not get painted until Sunday afternoon, but the scars of battle will last forever.

Which brings us to another point important to the understanding of American marriages—the rather complete misinterpretation of the classic matrimonial phrase "for better, for worse." Needless to say, the words contain many levels of meaning, but Americans typically miss the point that marriage is the dynamic state of interrelationship that we have been talking about. It changes both partners in one direction or another, as we well know, but we have trained Americans to believe in a static view of matrimony. Therefore, imagine Prince Charming's consternation when, Sleeping Beauty having been kissed, she stirs into life and changes.

At the moment she (or he) is just plain growing, with no "worse" about it. But the partner is thunderstruck. "This isn't the woman (man) I married!" he (she) cries. And since the phrase is meant and taken in accusation rather than in admiration, we are in business.

We know that these people have different growing rates, simply because they are men and women, but they themselves are afraid of growing and ignorant about rates. Hence it requires no genius to throw panic into both when one of them spurts, and thus to ensure that the growth is for the worse.

The classic method here is to keep husband and wife on the surface level of understanding as regards each other. Picking on trifles, such as the manner of blotting lipstick or of slurping fried eggs. In most cases this is all you have to do, because the majority of Americans are totally incapable of getting below the surface. Each partner senses that he himself is in the grip of forces which

are driving him on, but he hasn't the least idea what they are and he cannot imagine that the other person is equally driven. You therefore have it made. The growing is for worse.

However, in the percentage of cases where there is some penetration beneath the surface a different approach must be used. The time-tested method is to fuse the image of the partner with that of the Scapegoat—he looks a little like their popular picture of US, doesn't he? Let them find in him (her) a focus for all blame, an outlet for all hostility, a target for all frustration.

Humans ought to find fault, of course, because they aren't perfect. But they ought to find it in themselves. When they yield to our blandishments and blame everything on the Scapegoat, they are effectually prevented from ever learning their own emotional drives and needs—not to mention their partner's own dynamic. (You can clinch this case by having the more aggressive partner talk with sentimental friends, or with doting parents, who will solidify her in her belief that she is completely right and her husband completely wrong. The classic phrase for Mama to use here is, of course, "He ought to see a psychiatrist," which means "He's absolutely hopeless." It is not good general strategy, however, actually to let daughter put the matter before a marriage counselor. He might be able to objectify the situation.)

The final opportunity we have is the splendid climate of opinion prevailing in America regarding plural marriages. Surely you remember from your study of those quaint tribal customs called "law" that in present-day America it's illegal to have more than one wife or husband at a given time, but that there's no bag limit when viewed serially. This permission is taken most seriously. Given that attitude, plus the addiction to the Romantic Delusion, the Cult of Youth, and the Pursuit of Happiness, it isn't too much to say that most American matrimonial ventures are trial marriages from the very start and that when the trials come the marriages dissolve.

This is wonderful, because it means that the partners are actively encouraged by the prevailing culture (I use the word loosely—America isn't really a civilization; it's a market) to resist the growth process that comes from rubbing elbows in big and little ways. Or, to revert to our original figure, are resisting the pain of having their tender jagged edges fitted together. Divorce almost always means

that each partner is successfully hanging on to his own partiality—and what more could you want? Therefore, suggest the magic word “divorce” in every crisis that comes along.

And if you achieve it, then suggest remarriage. Don’t be afraid. *One* marriage is admittedly a very dangerous threat to our work. But *two* marriages aren’t bad at all. And nine marriages are magnificent. I believe that the present American record is eighteen, but I haven’t read the morning paper yet. The point is, of course, that the more marriages a person has, the less likely he is to fall into Holy Matrimony.

Facts

Facts are terribly stubborn things, to the extent that our ideal policy calls for having people get along without facts entirely. And, strange as the statement will seem to you, my experience has been that this policy has a pretty fair record of success in America.

I anticipated your impolite sneers, because I know you think of the United States as a most scientific, enlightened, and knowledgeable country. In the face of your skepticism I'm not even going to try to document my assertion directly. Oh, I'll hint at it from time to time in the course of this lecture, but essentially I'm content to wait for your personal experience to teach you that America is riddled with ignorance, misinformation, prejudice, and superstition. Some of you may even be astute enough to discover that a great percentage of the "facts" that Americans absolutely *know* to be true are completely unfounded. A very few discerning spirits among you might possibly come to realize that the more important a fact is, the less it is appreciated in America.

On this point, consider the situation with regard to the Apostles' Creed. Its second paragraph, as you know to your sorrow, is a dread catena of cosmic facts piled one on the other to the point that I tremble to recall the thing, but this whole tremendous transaction is widely disregarded in enlightened American circles and, where it is regarded at all, is usually considered to be a sweet and endearing mythology. So is most of the Gospel story, for that matter.

Now this is an amazing situation, because of course American democracy and civilization couldn't exist for a minute unless the Creed and Gospel were true. But you are going to be continually astonished at the number of Americans who really think they can achieve

a superstructure of value without a foundation of fact. Indeed, you're going to discover that some Americans dote on value to the extent that they're impatient with, or actually suspicious of, facts. This is a very strange business to you and me, who were raised in the opposite school—we were led to believe that when a fact and a theory collided, that was too bad for the theory. We were also taught the equally important notion that it paid to have a certain amount of facts pretty well in hand before we spun out too fine a theory. In short, we were taught that facts are basic, rocklike, fundamental.

Well, I'm coming back to certain aspects of this point at the end of my lecture, so let's push on by starting all over again—at the beginning, where proper starts are made. And let's assume that in spite of our policy of keeping all truth at a minimum, some facts do leak out—which is admittedly the case. You are now faced with a pragmatic situation.

In dealing with it, your immediate reaction should be to muddy the water as much as you can. That is to say, if you can't achieve total ignorance—in others, I mean—you are to work for the false reading of a gauge, or the fat juicy lie, or the garbled report, or the misunderstanding.

In its small way this is one of the most enjoyable parts of your work. And the American Small Town, to one of which you will undoubtedly be assigned, lends itself to this ploy admirably. In every small town there is always one self-appointed, yet duly recognized, Town Crier whose work in the field of gossip, rumor, misunderstanding, and scandal is above reproach. Further, she is abetted by several aspirants to the title, whose skill is only a whisper inferior. Make the acquaintance of these ladies immediately upon your arrival, for they are indispensable to you. As you will learn in two days, they greatly prefer to get along without facts than to be bothered with them, but the possession of authentic information doesn't throw them off-stride. They can manage. If I'm not mistaken, they'll actually teach you a few things.

To move a bit closer to my main point, I will freely admit that your typical American client is apt to be rather addicted to facts. He is curious, and thinks he wants the facts Friday, Saturday, and every day—this is what you thought all the time; you just didn't

distinguish between "curiosity about facts" and "possession of the facts." His curiosity won't guarantee that he gets them. It will simply guarantee that he gets *something*, which might very well be hogwash. However, he will believe it implicitly if he reads it in print—I'm assuming that he actually reads what is stated, which is a vast assumption to make. Quite often the reader's impression and the author's intention aren't even on speaking terms.

(The probability of confusion is enormously enhanced when an attempt is made to convey information orally. Under the best possible conditions only about eight per cent of the American populace can really hear what is actually being said. The others have a mental block which makes conversation a pretty futile endeavor. The hearer has a notion firmly lodged in his head—how it got there I don't know—and this concept has power of possession over all other ideas that are seeking entrance. This is a strange thing, but quite true.)

However, in order to proceed we have to assume that your client somehow, somewhere, learned some truth. This is all right; don't push the panic button if your man happens to know a few things. Facts in their proper places (I'm defining the word "proper") have a lot of fine uses, so taking it all in all they shouldn't disturb you unduly. For example, not so long ago a dominant American fad was the television Quiz Show, in which any number of Americans demonstrated publicly, before bug-eyed millions, that they knew all sorts of irrelevant facts. I myself rather enjoyed the craze and was actively disappointed when some of our inept eager beavers misplayed the deal. No, the Quiz Show isn't with us any more. Somebody got the idea that the isolation booths might not be perfectly isolated, or something of that sort. I think the FBI went sniffing around to find out where all the facts were coming from, although I can be mistaken on the point. However, I ask you to note that even Americans are suspicious of informed Americans.

I was sorry when the bubble burst. I had liked the easy-money aspect of the thing—of this stuff a million dreams are made, and then they awaken and lo it was a dream—and I also liked the histrionic ability that seemed to be involved. All acting, posing, sham, and false front are right down my alley. Naturally you know that dishonesty, on any level, is always the best policy. But if you

can't have that you can at least work for the suspicion of it, and all is not lost.

The third endearing feature of the Quiz Show, and the most important one, brings me to my central thesis. Let's call it "facts for facts' sake." You see, in spite of our preference for the totally ignorant and the utterly befuddled, we have to take things as they are, and so our working policy with people who happen to be in possession of facts is to keep them on the level of facts. A mere fact never hurt anybody—nor did him any good, for that matter. When you come right down to it, a fact has no meaning whatever.

The difficulty is that facts *can* have meaning. By dint of certain disciplines, facts can be put into their places and arranged into a structure. That sort of thing we distinctly don't like, to the extent that we devote our careers to the avoiding of this calamity.

Calamity is not too strong a word. I've long ago pointed out to you that a human being is a creature of two worlds—an eternal soul doing time. His feet are on the ground but his head is in the air. Well, if I can take his head off it doesn't worry me in the slightest that his feet remain on the ground. Indeed, I dearly love to keep my clients on the level of the here and now, for this means that when their time is up they haven't acquired a taste for eternity. They would be unhappy in Heaven, not having learned the language or the customs of the place, and since God won't have His little darlings unhappy, there's only one other permanent place for them to go.

Well, when you are assigned you'll get a client with a literal, factual mind—making this selection won't force the Committee to burn any midnight oil. You'll get a man plodding along the pedestrian way, kicking up the dust of fact and never seeing a meaning, an overtone, or a parable. To him a rose will be a rose. He could look all day long at a Kansas wheatfield and never see a loaf of bread, much less an amber wave of grain or a world ready for the harvest. Talk poetry to him and I'll guarantee he'll come back with, "None of that nonsense for me, boy. You know what I think about poets? I think they're fairies."

Early in my career I had such a client, who so bored me with his magnificent obsession for facts that I finally tried an admittedly dangerous experiment on him—don't you fool around this way; you

couldn't cope with the situation if it got out of hand. I needled this fellow—he was a draftsman—into reading the Book of Revelation.

Naturally he didn't read it as he should—rather rapidly, for the flash and boom of the whole tremendous picture—but slowly and laboriously, analyzing each word and phrase. It absolutely disgusted me to watch his lips move as he wended his wormlike way down the columns. Naturally he got more and more puzzled, but to my considerable surprise he kept plodding grimly on. In the end, to my complete astonishment, he actually finished the thing and thus he came to that penultimate chapter where the seer, groping for effective symbols of the Real, describes Heaven as being paved with golden streets and set with precious stones and standing four-square—you know the dreadful passage. Well, my man put the book away and (I give you my word, and you know what that is worth) sat down to draw an exact spatial diagram of the place on the scale of one inch to the mile.

That's the way your client will be, and that's the way you are to keep him. It's precisely because grown-up facts are external symbols, designed to be windows through which a person may catch a glimpse of the Real, that you must always turn them into solid doors that bar the looking. There are indeed tongues in trees and sermons in stones. Now I have the lowest possible opinion of the average preacher's sermon—I would gladly defend the thesis that the preaching of sermons is a pastime to be encouraged—but I am extremely leery of the sermons in stones, and especially leery of any human who can hear them there.

The type of mind that you must absolutely prevent is well described by a dead Englishman named Chesterton who wrote a lot of books that are still being read in America. The fellow was a thorn in our spirit on innumerable counts, and I think you'll see why as I quote you a passage from his book *The Everlasting Man*—which I sincerely hope is out of print.

He states his (my) theme thus: "There is nothing that really indicates a subtle and in the true sense a superior mind so much as this power of comparing a lower thing with a higher and yet that higher with a higher still; of thinking on three planes at once." Then he illustrates my theme in this manner: "There is perhaps nothing so perfect in all language or literature as the use of these

three degrees in the parable of the lilies of the field; in which he seems first to take one small flower in his hand and note its simplicity and even its impotence; then suddenly expands it in flamboyant colours into all the palaces and pavilions full of a great name in national legend and national glory; and then, by yet a third overturn, shrivels it to nothing once more with a gesture as if flinging it away . . . and if God so clothes the grass that today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven—how much more. . . .”

If your client ever gets to have that type of mind, or anything even close to that type of mind, he won't be your client any longer. He'll be in the hands of Specialists, and you'll be back at the bottom of the ladder. For dereliction much less serious than this I once transferred a subordinate to International Falls, Minnesota. He's still there, and I do hope that he enjoys the winters.

By the way, I'd better point out that acquiring this type of mind isn't solely or even mainly an intellectual feat. So if your client has an I.Q. of 62, which is probable, don't rule him out on that score alone. On the other hand, if his brains are rated at 162, don't be overly alarmed. Oh, human brains can be awkward things, but the quality of mind I'm talking about is more spiritual than intellectual and hence it's available to all. It may be even more available to the truly simple-minded, because they haven't any intellectual pride to stand in the way.

Since I've already been over a good deal of the process by which a human can break through the rock wall of fact into the open field of meaning, I'll confine myself here to the dangers involved in the atrocious habit of reading. You yourselves can apply the illustration to other areas—conversation, for example, which might possibly come back into existence some day. They've already begun this revival on TV, which would be as good a place as any for the development to end.

Speaking ideally about reading, your client should never read anything at all—not even cookbooks, some of which contain quite nasty possibilities. Your client is much better occupied when he spends his time on parties and movies and all that sort of thing (I'm happy for him that electricity has now replaced the kerosene lamp and that therefore there are so many interesting things to do). But if your man simply must read—and I doubt that you can completely

prevent the indulgence—give him a magazine, the more predigested the better. Or one of those plain, blunt, four-letter-word opuses that have the country by the throat. You know—"I stood up. I knocked him down. I stamped his teeth out. Then I lit a cigarette." (My, how I miss good flowing prose.)

The truly great books are to be most studiously avoided. If your client ever got into one of those he might discover that the author had had human experiences, had thought about them, and had found some meaning in them which he was trying to put over. It makes me heartsick when a man, engaged in reading some classic work, says slowly to himself, "Why, this fellow is just like me! And the way he puts things! Say, how did he express that idea that I sorta had hold of a couple years ago—" and back goes his nose into the book. This is a major break-through.

Why, the next thing he will discover is that the author is continually moving on two levels at once. That he writes about facts and about the interpretation of facts all in the same sentence. That symbols, parables, and double meanings are all over the place. I was reading *Walden* aloud to the Professor of Astronomy last night, and almost on the first page I came across this illustration of my point: ". . . the same sun which ripens my beans illumines at once a system of earths like ours. If I had remembered this it would have prevented some mistakes. This was not the light in which I hoed them." Well, the Professor shortly lost interest and I didn't go on, but I know that the whole work simply crawls with this sort of allusive stuff. So do all the great human compositions, and this is a primary reason why you must exert every energy to keep these volumes safely on the library shelves. If your client gets to reading them, it is all but certain that the blunt facts of his daily existence will ultimately begin to be transfigured.

By every means keep your client away from any genuine spiritual reading—get him to join a Book Club if this is the only available device. Oh, it's relatively safe to let him scan the modern "spiritual" tripe that I spoke about before, but keep him away from the authentic article at all costs. Any true master of the spiritual thinks and writes automatically in the parabolic way, as I do. Your client, of necessity, will have his eyes opened as he follows down the page. The really fundamental danger of the spiritual giants isn't so much

that their insights inspire the common herd as teach them this process, which they can then begin to use for themselves. And there is absolutely nothing worse than a human being who has learned to suck on the facts of life in order to extract their spiritual juices. Why, this is a large part of what human life is *for*.

(Humans think that life is for happiness, and Americans think so *a fortiori*, perhaps because they're expressly licensed to the Pursuit of Happiness in one of their basic documents. But happiness isn't a directly pursuable end in itself; it's a by-product of the pursuit of something else—a "hap," as their English word implies. Human life is for the ever-increasing knowledge, love, and service of God, and perceptive people, looking back, would rather relive the "bad" times than the "good" ones, because in the "bad" times they learned more and faster. But this fact won't trouble you during your American tour. The citizens there firmly believe that happiness is the *right* of every individual, and they further believe that happiness is the state of being in which they ought to be *all the time*. Of course this is essentially true in the case of saints, but your clients are not saints, nor are they desirous of being saints—our Semantics Department has done some wonderful work with that word—nor are they willing to make the necessary effort in order to become saints.)

But let's get back to our books. A few years ago I would have said nothing about the reading of that greatest of all spiritual works, the Holy Bible. But there's been a perfectly ghastly revival of this forgotten practice, and so a few hints will be in point. Naturally the safest procedure is to keep them completely away from the thing, but if they simply must dabble with it I'd suggest that you have them resolve to begin at the start and read the whole compilation straight through. This procedure, pointless for a dozen reasons, usually suffices. Ninety-nine out of a hundred will never get beyond Leviticus and will thereupon give up the whole business forever. They'll keep on revering the book from a respectful distance, but idolatry is always safe. It doesn't matter at all what the idol is.

If your client persists, it's probably best that he go it alone—I say this not simply out of preference for the solitary vices but also to warn you against the rash of intimate Bible Study Groups that disfigure the face of America. They're dangerous—the Other Side likes

this "two or three" business. And suggest that he use the method of a chapter a day. This doesn't make any sense either and, if wisely guided, will serve only to cement your client's quantitative and literal mind in its original bent. As he plows along, perhaps you can induce him to believe that the names of people and places are of prime importance. Perhaps you can have him chart the exact itinerary of St. Paul's missionary journeys. Maybe you can have him keep a tabulation and discover which Gospel has the most miracles in it. It doesn't really matter, so long as you keep him on the surface and literal level.

But if your student begins to meditate over short passages, to mull them over and soak them in and turn them about to see them from various angles, if you find him with his finger in the book, the book in his lap, and his vacant eyes staring out the window at a dawning light, you had better send for ME. Your client is getting beyond you. He's beginning to sort his factual lumber, and the next thing you know he'll be building a structure of meaning.

What if he does? What if he climbs the ladder of fact and rumination, withdrawal and return, work and evaluation, effort and contemplation, reading and meditation, until he stands atop a very high mountain breathing rarified air? Why, on the whole I think I'd have him write a book about meaning and mysticism and then leave him there alone on his mountain. In his book, almost certainly, he will scornfully kick down the ladder of fact by which he attained his pinnacle. With an ease that is truly astonishing, when you consider the bloodiness of the path by which he crawled up hill over stones and through briars, you can lead him really to expect that others may arrive at the same destination by the simple process of flying—that is to say, by reading his book. He will really be amazed that they can't and will bitterly ascribe it to the fact that they won't. He doesn't know that by kicking down the ladder of fact he has actually left himself groundless and wholly out of the reach of the others.

So, I say, leave him there in his snug retreat, absorbed in the contemplation of his navel and the enjoyment of that spurious mysticism which "begins in mist, centers in I, and ends in schism."

Mediocrity

Before launching this lecture, I'd like to express my disappointment. In plain words, someone in this class has been telling lies about me. As it happens, I know who he is—oh Accidie, my boy, would you mind closing the window? Why, Accidie, you're red as a beet. Not feeling well?

But to get back to lies and liars. Lies are a fine product which, as I was telling you only yesterday, we happily father under almost all circumstances. So in a way I almost admire the zeal of that one of you who shall continue to be nameless—perhaps we could stand a little more draft, at that; one of our number seems to be suffocating—I repeat, that one of you whose diligence prompts him to practice the Craft of Lying even in his spare time. But dear, dear, that I myself should be the butt, after all this close association. It almost makes me believe the cynical statement that teaching consists in casting artificial pearls before genuine swine.

Ah, well. Do you know what this liar said? He said that in class a couple of days ago I made some derogatory remarks about a fellow professor—the Professor of Anatomy, to be precise. Why, I had the Professor of Anatomy in for a spot of acid only yesterday. The Professor and I have known each other for aeons. He's the last person about whom I would ever make any slurring remarks, assuming that I was given to the practice. I was able to assure him of this last evening, after I had convinced him that no such comment had ever been made in this classroom.

That is, by me. I had to tell him that I did overhear one of you—I named the one—saying something about his having a plodding mind not given to thinking in parables, and I stated my opinion that this

may have been the factual basis of the distortion that had reached him.

But I mustn't take up any more of your time with these trifling personal matters, which will be adequately handled in due course—I wonder if you are aware that I myself will be the one who selects your individual American assignments. You didn't realize that? My, my. Perhaps I should have told you earlier. But then, how could I? It was only last night—late—that I sought, and obtained, this privilege.

Incidentally, I also learned last night that we are to have you students ready for assignment by tomorrow, Friday the 13th, insofar as getting you ready is at all possible. This arbitrary and opinionated action is completely infuriating. Who in Hell does HE think HE is? Why, the way HE acts sometimes you'd think HE was absolute sovereign of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. But—well, that's the way it's going to be.

Oh, I'm not really sorry. Naturally I haven't told you the tenth part of what I know about America, but I'm reasonably sure I've told you more than you can stomach and digest. And besides, after this lecture, when you go to your spadework in America, I shall take up my new duties as Dean of the Interplanetary Center for Psychical Research. I'm really looking forward to that. There will be a few administrative duties, of course, but for the most part WE at the Center just sit around all day and scheme.

And now let's get down to the subject in hand, which I'll introduce by recalling an alarming situation that occurred on St. Stephen's Day many years ago. I wasn't in on the start of things—Headquarters had recently relieved me of private practice in order that I might devote myself exclusively to consultations; if I remember correctly I was at the time Chief Trouble Shooter for the Mid-Atlantic States—but this was the way things were shaping up when I was called in:

The attractive teen-age daughter in an undistinguished middle-class family had received for Christmas—among too many other things, you may be sure—a rather nice formal dress which unfortunately was too long. I say “unfortunately” because the climactic dance of the entire season was to be held that night at the club, and so there wasn't time to have the dress taken up professionally (even if the family had any money left over, which they hadn't; the January

bills were already a dark cloud on the horizon). As a result, Mama was doing the remodeling job in the middle of the living-room floor, right in front of the Christmas tree.

The scene was a depressingly gay and lighthearted one, full of joy at the moment and bright anticipation for the future. Even the husband and son joined in the banter at Sis's first formal date. When the two males, moved by the undeniable spirit of that ghastly season (always beware of Christmas), actually made a hearth fire at which they began to pop corn, things were really getting out of hand and I was wisely called in.

It took a little doing on my part to bring the conversation back to safe ground, but I did manage it. I saw my cue in the fact of the coming dance and, before too long, was able to induce Mama to say to daughter, through a mouthful of pins, "Make sure to marry money. It's just as easy to fall in love with a wealthy boy as with a poor one."

The statement was neither original nor world-shaking—I'm not an amateur who strains for the spectacular—but it did the job nicely. It burst the joy of the moment like a pricked bubble. Papa immediately got sore because Mama's remark came at him, loaded with twenty years of "poor provider" dialogue between the spouses, and things went on from there in perfectly predictable fashion. Within two minutes the boy was cussed out for burning the popcorn. After eight minutes Son was banished to his room for smearing salty butter on the new dress, Daughter was in tears, Mama was grim, and Pop was jolting himself with bourbon in the kitchen. I fouled up an old string of Christmas tree lights and left on another emergency call. Later I learned that, as I had suspected, Daughter spent most of her time at the dance trying to make the bank president's son.

That's the long-run beauty of little time bombs like Mama's remark. They get into the soul like water in a foundation sill and start a process of wet rot. In combination with millions of other drops of similar water they can bring the whole house down in one's forties—the time of the sickness that destroyeth at noonday, when living has been daily for a long time and promises to be very daily for a long time into the future. I'm sure that our friend Accidie knows all about this. Statements like Mama's, when ground in by an ensuing hassle, can readily confuse all principles until, in the burden and

heat of the day, the erstwhile idealist settles for an available mediocrity.

Yes, I begin my final lecture—on the basically important topic of Mediocrity—with this seemingly trivial incident because it so beautifully illumines the subject. In further preamble I remind you of a fact that I sincerely trust you learned in your general course on Human Nature: that all human beings are “small souls with great possibilities,” as a certain Father Andrew has phrased this fundamental truth.

It pains me to dwell on the unpleasant, and yet if WE aren't realists, who is going to be? Therefore, I remind you that you must *never* overlook the “great possibilities” part of the statement just made. Many and many a human—even many and many an American—has actually achieved his potential in spite of every obstacle we have thrown in the way. This is a sobering thought, especially when you consider that your entire *raison d'être* is precisely to prevent this catastrophe.

In underlining this fact, my first point—I insist that you engrave it indelibly on your memories—is that any human being is a creature who is carrying more than he was built to carry. Because their world is literally fallen, all humans are fighting an uphill battle. And each one carries a huge pack on his back as he struggles up the mountain. The advantage of this situation is that it often makes him easier to kick down. But not always.

I was contemplating this fact the other night as I studied the seven players around a poker table. Here's a quick rundown. One man had a daughter who was a prostitute. The wife of another had recently died of a painful and wasting cancer. A third was permanently crippled with a severe coronary, acquired through long years of the sacrificial drudgery necessary to put his son through college and medical school. The partner of a fourth had absconded with all his assets. The mother of the fifth had murdered his father. The twin sons of the sixth were Mongolian idiots. The seventh man's wife was an alcoholic, a dope addict, and an adulteress.

Yet each man was composed, courteous, gentlemanly, and kindly. He carried his inner sorrow with an outward smile—and you may be sure that I have held up for your inspection only one small random parcel from the huge pack on his back. Yes, humans can be great.

But you'd better not dwell on this aspect of the subject too long, lest evil befall you. I had a close associate once who became morbidly obsessed with this matter. One day I saw him begin to lead a high-school girl away from a dope pusher. As he took her by the hand there was a tremendous blinding brilliance, and we never saw him again. HE really gets around, doesn't HE? Or was it Somebody Else? I've never been sure, but in either case it serves my associate right.

Humans, too, can dwell overlong on this most dangerous topic. Be sure to get your licks in quickly if, say, your client in the midst of a subway rush begins to muse on the incredible unknown burdens that this vast crowd carries so valiantly. There are various methods. As good a one as any is to have some Negro step on his toes, or some Italian breathe garlic in his face—it's far easier to feel warm toward Mankind than to a particular specimen, especially if the specimen is unwashed. Or, if your client is philosophically inclined, induce him to wonder whether God can possibly know and love each of these countless people. He'll finally shake his head, go about his own business, and thus forget the matter entirely. Or, after his daughter's death, let him misconstrue the quiet surface endurance or the brave surface gaiety of his brokenhearted wife until he dismisses her as hopelessly callous—there's nothing quite so satisfactory as driving people apart when they have a common grief that threatens to bring them together.

This approach, incidentally, can readily lead to that splendid thing, the martyr complex. Or, best of all, to that ultimate decision of people about people—"they ain't worth it," which was the last suggestion made to The Son on His cross. WE know—as unfortunately The Son did, too—that they are indeed worth it, and the knowledge is what keeps driving US on to make them resign from the human race. I can especially commend this last attack if you're working with that one person in a hundred who is hauling ninety-nine fellows up the hill. (Some authorities say that five per cent of the human race do the pulling for the other ninety-five, but I believe that my figures are closer to the truth.) If you can get this key man to sell out, all the others will simply sit down, take their packs off, and start playing games.

So I stress the fact that there are indeed a few giants in the earth

—individuals who are achieving their potential. Incidentally, the chief reason for your prolonged study of Human Biography was to acquaint you with human possibility, and I strongly advise you to continue this study for at least fifteen minutes every day—there is, I regret to say, ample material to keep you going eternally in this way. The usual advice is to read a daily chapter in *The Lives of the Saints*, but I admit my own preference for secular biography—it's certainly more germane to your American tour of duty, in any case. Abraham Lincoln, for example, incites me to a fine fury. I used to keep a picture of him on my desk.

But I find that I can't go on with this negative side of the subject. However, perhaps I've said enough. And our real interest naturally lies in the "small souls" aspect of things, to which I now direct your attention.

"Direct your attention"—what a phrase! Why, if I had only one subject to discourse upon it would be this one. You'll note that I deliberately chose the topic for my concluding remarks in this whole course. It covers everything and makes sense of the whole. Indeed, it is only because human possibilities are so great that human failure is so gratifying—there's not much fun in further shrinking a mouse. As I said, this prospect is what keeps us attacking in all ways on all fronts.

Now let me ask you: What's the one common factor in all the diverse specimens that we have caged up Down Below? That they're ugly—thin—misshapen—twisted? Yes, all of that is true. But I think you miss the truly significant characteristic—the fact that they are all dwarfs. They are all of less than human stature; they didn't walk tall and straight upon the earth. (The Hell of it is, they *have* to be dwarfs. Our engineers have never yet been able to design a cage large enough to hold a full-sized human. They're working on the problem, but the limitations are severe. The trouble is that a life-sized human is too large for the whole of Hell. How can you build a cage off in some far corner when the whole Place can't hold the person you want to put inside?)

Perhaps that simple engineering problem will serve to open your eyes to the utter magnificence of Mediocrity and of how important are all the items that help produce it. I hope so, because time is running out and I won't have opportunity to document the state-

ment. I can only point out that every specific topic I have treated in this whole course is related to this governing subject and refer you to your notes.

In peroration, I will add the comforting thought that American culture is good—by which I mean that it's the enemy of the best. Essentially, then, all you have to do is adapt your particular client's daily decisions to the prevailing climate. In every choice let him settle for the good rather than the better, if you can't make him decide on the worse. It isn't necessary that WE get our clients down to zero—fifty per cent will do nicely. We have legions of cages just that size.

But I know how anxious you must be to get at it, so let's do just that. In making my assignments I have decided to go by The Book, so the last shall be first.

Accidie, my boy, I spent a great deal of time considering you. I weighed many factors. But in simple truth I think it was the weather report that controlled my ultimate decision. I mean, here it is early February and the coldest winter in the history of the Weather Bureau.

My boy, I've put you down for this little settlement in the interior of Alaska.

No, not that one. I would consider that one to be too far south, too coastal, and far too civilized for you. This one. This tiny one right here—why, here comes my old friend the Professor of Anatomy. Professor, this is a timely visit. I have just this moment begun—

[Editor's note: A new voice takes over on the tape at this point. Obviously it is that of the Professor of Anatomy.]

Yes, Professor. Yes, I know. And the timing is no accident. HE HIMSELF—HE really gets around, doesn't HE?—has been outside with me for some time, but HE had to leave. You're long-winded, you know. However, HE asked me to wait and to come in after you had made your first assignment.

I can only imagine—but then, I don't have a very imaginative mind; I've been told it's rather plodding—that HE anticipated the way your orderly and logical brain would work. However that may be, I have

the joy of informing you that the assignment you have just made is your own new one. No, you won't be going to the Interplanetary—

[Editor's note: The tape breaks off at this point. From its appearance I would say that it had been scorched, or burned, completely through.]



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